WESLEY AS SOCIOLOGIST THEOLOGIAN, CHURCHMAN

JOHN ALFRED FAULKNER

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I

WESLEY AS SOCIOLOGIST

How can we help but be drawn out to that little, restless man of the eighteenth century, with his noble enthusiasms, his practical temper, his cool head, his sane and wise methods, who combined as few other men have ever done devotion to the largeness of God's truth as he saw it with ethical passion, and so comes before us in the unique role of both a religious and theological, *and* moral, reformer? A social reformer in the same sense he was not. It is rather only indirectly, as the outcome of his zeal for Christian faith and life, that he appears in these sociological relations, or as inheriting the love of order of his ancestors that he comes out with his conservative views of politics and thus actually exercised a steadying influence upon public life.

I do not find that Wesley brought forward any new views of society or of political economy, or that he had thought out what Christianity really demands, if radically carried out, in the reconstruction of human relations. He took the

world as he found it, he worked with such laws and institutions as were in vogue; he did not disown the right of private property, the right of accumulation, the right of monarchy, the right of Parliament to tax colonies in return for the undeniable blessings—as he considered them—of British protection. On all such questions he stood for the *status quo*. His work was not to change laws or institutions, but to change men. The French Revolution began May 25, 1789, with the meeting of the National Assembly. On July 12 of that year an insurrection broke out in Paris, and the first blood was shed, and two days later the people stormed the Bastille. On August 4 feudal and manorial rights were abrogated by the Assembly, and a solemn declaration of the equality of human rights was made. But that *annus mirabilis*, 1789, goes by without a word by Wesley in his *Journal*. I wonder what he thought of that and of the events of 1790.

In 1789 he was eighty-six, but still bright, active, preaching every day as usual, and interested in affairs, as his reading the king of Sweden's book on *The Balance of Power in Europe* shows. He refers to Rousseau three or four times in his Journal, but never to his

~~political or social views.~~ In his sermon, "The Work of God in North America" (printed in 1778), he gives a kind of philosophy of American history. He says the colonies became wealthy on account of their immense trade. With wealth came pride, then luxury. "We are apt to imagine nothing can exceed the luxurious living which now prevails in Great Britain and Ireland. But alas! what is this to that which lately prevailed in Philadelphia and other parts of North America? A merchant or middling tradesman there kept a table equal to that of a nobleman in England, entertaining his guests with ten, twelve, yea, sometimes twenty dishes of meat at a meal! And this was so far from being blamed by anyone that it was applauded as generosity and hospitality." Then came idleness, then lust, where he quotes Ovid's lines in Latin:

"It is asked, why has Ægisthus become an adulterer?

"The cause is clear; he was lazy."

These were the reasons why the work of God declined in America. Then came the Revolution, due to the desire for independence, which brought on poverty again, which was the nurse of virtue. He closes his sermon as

follows: "From these we learn that spiritual blessings are what God principally intends in all those severe dispensations. He intends they should all work together for the destruction of Satan's kingdom, the promotion of the kingdom of his dear Son; that they should all minister to the general spread of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. But after the inhabitants of these provinces are brought again to 'seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' there can be no doubt that all other things, all temporal blessings, will be added unto them. He will send through all the happy land, with all the necessaries and conveniences of life, not independency (which would be no blessing, but an heavy curse, both to them and to their children), but liberty, real, legal liberty; a liberty from oppression of every kind, from illegal violence; a liberty to enjoy their lives, their purses, and their property; in a word a liberty to be governed in all things by the laws of their country. They will again enjoy true British liberty, such as they enjoyed before their first settlement in America, neither less nor more than is enjoyed by the inhabitants of their mother country. If their mother country had ever desired to deprive them of this, she might

have done it long ago, and that this was never done is a demonstration that it was never intended. But God permitted this strange dread of imaginary evils to spread over all the people that he might have mercy upon all, that he might do good to all, by saving them from the bondage of sin, and bringing them into the glorious liberty of the children of God."[1]

This is a thoroughly characteristic passage of Wesley, revealing (1) his belief that riches have an inevitable tendency to corrupt; (2) his Tory optimism that the ruling powers wish well to those governed, and that in the latter's independence they have no more liberty than they had before; (3) that men have the right to full civil liberty; (4) that the chief thing is the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

In the strenuous times of "Wilkes and Liberty" and of the Junius Papers, Wesley published a tract, *Thoughts upon Liberty* (1772). It is a vigorous defense of civil and religious liberty, but with as vigorous assertion that at that very moment England was in full possession of both. He denounces the persecution of the Puritans by the Anglicans, of the Presbyterians in Scotland by the same, scorches the

[1] *Works*, London ed., 14 vols., vol. vii, pp. 413, 418–419.

Act of Uniformity and the Conventicle Act, by which act his grandfather and great-grandfather were dispossessed, and writes in splendid tone of protest against all oppression. But with all this, the pamphlet is thoroughly Tory. The king is the fountain and guardian of English liberty, to speak against him is almost a crime. A man who publishes lies against the king ought to be punished. "We enjoy at this day throughout these kingdoms such liberty, civil and religious, as no other kingdom or commonwealth in Europe, or in the world, enjoys; and such as our ancestors never enjoyed from the Conquest to the Revolution. Let us be thankful for it to God and the king" (vol. xi, pp. 34–46). No Wilkes or Junius for Wesley.

He has a pungent pamphlet *Thoughts Concerning the Origin of Power* (no date, but 1772). Its purpose is to answer the question, old as Aristotle, From whom is political power ultimately derived? and its method is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the claim that that source is the people. It shows the utter lack of sycophancy or of itch for popularity on the part of Wesley that he should have pounced upon this thesis so popular in his later days. He says himself that the opinion that power comes ultimately from

the people "is now generally espoused by men of understanding and education; and that (if I do not mistake) not in England alone, but almost in every civilized nation." Wesley asks: Who are the people? And here he turns the argument of the opponent against himself. Women are excluded, and men under twenty-one, and yet you say power comes from the people. "But they have not the wisdom or experience necessary to choose their governors." Who has? One in a hundred? But you have already put the matter on the basis of humanity. Consistently with your premises you cannot exclude women or minors. Even after this you are inconsistent, for you exclude in England all men who are not freeholders or have not forty shillings a year,—a most unjust discrimination. If power descends from the people, the poor man has just as good a right to vote as the rich man. Then, historically your thesis is vain. When have the people ever chosen a ruler in England? Did they choose William the Conqueror? Henry IV? Wesley passes in review all the crises in the change of rulers in England, and shows that in no case did the people have the determining voice. Even for William III the consent of the

people was neither asked nor obtained. Wesley says the only case he remembers where the people—that is, all or nearly all the people—conferred power was that of the raising of Masaniello (Tommaso Aniello) to supreme control of affairs in Naples in July, 1647—certainly (Wesley might have added) an ill-fated venture. "I apprehend," says Wesley, with sarcastic naïveté, "that no one desires that the people should take the same steps in London."

From the principle that no one has the power to take life but God, Wesley argues that all power must descend from God alone. "The supposition, then, that the people are the origin of power is in every way indefensible. It is absolutely overturned by the very principle on which it is supposed to stand, namely, that the right of choosing his governors belongs to every partaker of human nature. It would then belong to all. But no one did ever maintain this, nor probably ever will. Therefore this boasted principle falls to the ground, and the whole superstructure with it. So common sense brings us back to the grand truth, there is no power but of God!" (vol. x, pp. 46–53).

Here Wesley stops. He is simply content to refute the popular cry of his day. He does not

ask, "Upon whom does power devolve from God? How does God govern?" He does not put the king or aristocracy in the place of the people. He simply shows that the popular contention must either go farther or be given up.

Wesley gets in close touch with economic questions in his little treatise, *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions* (1773). It is written with his accustomed frankness and directness, whatever we may say of its judgments. He first describes the poverty of the country and the fearful lengths to which people were reduced to get food, and then sets out to answer the question, "What is the cause of all this?" People are without work. Why? Manufacturers can find no vent for their goods. Why? Food is so dear that people can afford to buy nothing else. Why is food so dear? Wesley now takes the great staples in order:

1. Bread corn (that is, wheat and other grains). "The grand cause is because such immense quantities of corn are continually consumed by distilling." From the remark of a London distiller Wesley concludes that "nearly half of the wheat produced in the kingdom is every year consumed, not by so harmless a way as throwing it into the sea, but by converting it

into deadly poison; poison that naturally destroys not only the strength and life, but also the morals of our countrymen." The amount of duty paid is no sign of the amount consumed, because many distillers pay no duty at all, or duty on only a part. To the objection that the duty brings in a revenue to the king, Wesley replies that such revenue is gotten at the cost of blood. "O tell it not in Constantinople that the English raise the royal revenue by selling the flesh and blood of their countrymen."

2. Why are oats so dear? Because there are four times as many horses kept for coaches and chaises as were a few years ago.

3. Beef and mutton. Because many farmers who used to breed large quantities of sheep and cattle breed none now, but have turned their attention to horses. "Such is the demand not only for coach and chaise horses, which are bought and destroyed in incredible numbers, but much more for bred horses which are yearly exported by the hundreds, yea, thousands, to France."

4. Pork, poultry and eggs—what is the matter here? The monopolizing of farms. The land which some years ago was divided into ten or twenty farms is now engrossed by

one great farmer. The little farmers were constantly sending their pork, fowls, and eggs to market. But the gentlemen farmers do nothing of this.

Generally luxury is a great cause of scarcity. The rich consume so much that they leave nothing for the poor.

5. Land. Larger incomes are needed, so rents are raised. The farmer must have a larger price to pay his rent, and that brings land up.

Then, underneath all, are the enormous taxes, which make everything dear. And the taxes are high because of the national debt, the bare interest of which is now four millions a year.

Wesley makes two or three suggestions at the end. Prohibit all distilling—the great bane of the country. Lay a tax of ten pounds on every horse exported to France, and a tax of five pounds on every gentleman's horse. Let no farms of above a hundred pounds a year. Repress luxury both by laws and example. As to the national debt, discharge half of it, so save two millions a year (Wesley does not say how), and abolish all useless pensions, especially to idle governors of forts and castles (vol. xi, pp. 53–59).

This is Wesley's contribution to the economic question of his time. Well intended, the result of shrewd observation and frank facing of difficulties, it only touches the surface of a condition that needed severer remedies—remedies that none in England then proposed, and few now propose. What was and is the cause of the monopolization of land in England and other European countries? The institution of nobility. Did Wesley propose to abolish that? What was the cause of the general backward state of the farmers and artisans? Popular ignorance. Did Wesley tackle that problem? What was the cause of the national debt? The barbaric war system of so-called Christian nations. There is no word of that here. That made necessary the fearful import and internal duties and taxes on the necessaries of life which kept up in England till the great Corn Law Bill of 1846. It is to the credit of Wesley that he saw the waste and iniquity of the drink business and was the herald of the modern temperance agitation, and that he was the opponent of luxury of all kinds, but it is evident that Wesley was no sociological reformer in the present-day sense. He was a hearty defender of the main institutions of his country,

the king, chief of all, and anything approaching socialism or radical dealing with land, taxation, etc., was never in his thought.

I spoke of war a moment ago. What was Wesley's principle here? He vividly describes war's horrors. "Hark! the cannons roar! A pitchy cloud covers the face of the sky. Noise, confusion, terror, reign over all! Dying groans are on every side" (vol. vii, p. 404), etc. "In all the judgments of God, the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness. Famine, plague, earthquake—the people see the hand of God. But wherever war breaks out God is forgotten" (vol. xii, p. 327). He also saw the insanity of war. In his *Address to the More Serious Part of the Inhabitants of Great Britain Respecting the Unhappy Contest between Us and Our American Brethren*" (1776), he sees the folly of deciding international questions by arms. The armies advance toward each other. What are they going to do? To shoot each other through the head or heart, to stab and butcher each other, hasten (it is to be feared) one another into everlasting burnings. Why so? What harm have they done to one another? Why, none at all. Most of them are entire strangers to each other. But a matter is in dispute relative to

the mode of taxation. So these countrymen, children of the same parents, are to murder each other with all possible haste to "prove who is in the right. Now what an argument is this! What a method of proof! What an amazing way of deciding controversies!" Wesley hints at a better way, though his suggestion remains only a hint. He laments the "astonishing want of wisdom" shown in deciding such a matter by bloodshed. "Are there no wise men among us? None who are able to judge between brethren? But brother going to war against brother, and that in the very sight of the heathen. Surely this is a sore evil amongst us. How is wisdom perished from the wise! What a flood of folly and madness has broke in upon us!" (vol. xi, pp. 122, 123).

In his book *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1756), Wesley treats of war as an evidence of the depravity of man. He calls war a "horrid reproach to the Christian name—yea, to the name of man, to all reason and humanity." He says the deciding of controversies in this way is as unreasonable as it is inhuman. "So long as this monster stalks uncontrolled, where is reason, virtue, humanity? They are utterly excluded!" (vol. ix, pp. 221, 223). Wesley,

then, saw the horrible illogicalness of war, its utter barbarity. He suggested a remedy in impartial arbitration, but he did not go farther, His large-mindedness prevented him from following George Fox in making abstinence from arms a test of Christianity, as he believed—as appears here and there through his writings—that society being what it is, an army is a necessary guarantee of good order, and that there may be justifiable wars.

In regard to toleration, Wesley was by both inheritance and nature a severe stickler for order. Besides, he had to suffer from mobs in his own person and in the person of his followers, and he believed that the law should keep a firm hand on unruly elements, just as he did with recalcitrants in his own society. Still, so much being said, he allowed to all creeds and classes the utmost liberty consistent with order. He was a strong believer in Roman Catholic emancipation so far as *religious* liberty was concerned, but he drew a line at political rights on the plea that while we must in no case hurt the Catholics, we ought not to put them in a place where they could hurt us. So he was in favor of an Established Protestant Church, and would keep Catholics out of office and without political

privileges. In 1891 at the celebration of the centennial of the death of Wesley, Catholics remembered this, and were by no means gracious in their references to him. It must be confessed that Wesley in this respect was not ahead of his age. At the same time it is fair to bear in mind that the history of Catholicism in France, Spain, Austria, and Italy during Wesley's lifetime and for fifty years before, was not such as to lead an earnest Protestant to liberal sentiments. If Catholics were granted the full rights of citizenship, might they not outlaw Protestants if they got the power, as they were doing on the Continent? That was the reasoning which retarded full Catholic emancipation till 1829 (vol. x, pp. 161–175).[2]

In the matter of riches, Wesley took the religious point of view. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven! Whoever sets his heart on earthly things so that he forgets the things of the Spirit, to that man, whether rich or poor, riches were a danger. As to what made a man rich, Wesley was very modest in his estimate. "Who-

[2] For full discussion of Wesley's attitude to Catholic toleration see Faulkner, in *Methodist Review*, New York, March, 1908, pp. 276ff.

soever has food to eat and raiment to put on, with something over, is rich" (vol. vii, p. 356). One must give at least a tenth of his income. "By whatsoever means thy riches increase . . . unless thou givest a full tenth of thy substance of thy field and occasional income, thou dost undoubtedly set thy heart upon thy gold, and it will eat thy flesh as fire." "Do you not know that God intrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessaries for your families) to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, so far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud your Lord by applying it to any other purposes?" Everything, then, above absolutely necessary expenses is to be given away. "After you have *gained* (with the cautions above given) *all you can*, and *saved all you can*, wanting nothing; spend not one pound, one shilling, or one penny, to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life, or, indeed, for any other end than to please and gratify God. Secondly, *hoard nothing*. Lay up no treasures on earth, but give all you can, that is, all you have. I defy all the men upon earth, yea, all the angels in

heaven, to find any other way of extracting the poison from riches." That is a hard saying. Who can bear it? It is unnecessary to say that Wesley practiced what he preached. "O leave nothing behind you! Send all you have before you into a better world" (vol. vii, pp. 356, 360–362).

Wesley believed that the love of riches was or would be the curse of Methodism. It was caught in a necessary historical sequence that destroyed it. This was the way: Religion produces frugality and industry. These last produce riches. As riches increase so do pride, anger, and every evil. So religion perishes. Thus it will be with the Methodists. The only way to avoid this is for the rich to give all they can, everything, in fact, above their necessary needs. Wesley revived, therefore, the ideas of the early church in regard to riches. He failed to see that the same religion which brought about frugality and industry, and thus riches, could inspire the rich to make a good use of their wealth, just as it did Lady Huntingdon. Southey makes the objection that Wesley's ideas of riches were almost as irrational as those of the strict friars and were incompatible with the welfare of the world.[3] Taken literally,

[3] *Life of Wesley*, Curry's ed. (Harpers), vol. ii, pp. 308–309.

they were. But like Christ's words, they were not taken literally by the early Methodists, and became less and less so. But the spirit of Wesley's ideas was exactly that of Christ and the early church.

In regard to methods of making money, Wesley warned the people against hazardous or unhealthy occupations, against those which cannot be made successful without cheating or over-reaching, against overcharging, gaining, pawnbroking, etc. "We cannot, consistent with brotherly love, sell our goods below market price; we cannot study to ruin our neighbor's trade to advance our own; much less can we entice away or receive any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain by swallowing up his neighbor's substance without gaining the damnation of hell." Here was Luther's hatred of monopoly. He was specially severe against the liquor trade. "We must not sell anything which tends to impair health. Such is eminently all the liquid fire commonly called drams or spirituous liquors. It is true these may have a place in medicine; they may be of use in some disorders, though this would rarely be occasion for them were it not for the unskillfulness of the practitioner.

Therefore such as prepare and sell them only for this end may keep their conscience clear. But who are they? Who prepare them only for this end? Do you know ten such distillers in England? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any who will buy, are poisoners-general. They murder his majesty's subjects by wholesale. Neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell like sheep. And what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them. The curse of God cleaves to the stones, the timber, the furniture of them! The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire that burns to the nethermost hell" (vol. vi, pp. 128–129), and more to the same effect.

This was one of the first voices raised in England against the liquor business, and it was raised with tremendous effect. With his practical instinct, Wesley incorporated his temperance principles immediately into his societies, which were virtually total abstinence organizations from the first.

He also considered that gain gotten from taverns, victualling houses, opera houses, play-

houses, and "any other places of public fashionable diversion," as tainted, because they minister directly or indirectly to unchastity or intemperance (vol. vi, pp. 129, 130).

Wesley was almost an ascetic in his judgment of anything like luxury. "Waste no money in curiously adorning your houses, in superfluous or expensive furniture, in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books, in elegant rather than useful gardens" (vol. vi, p. 131). He was opposed to leaving anything but the most modest sum to children. If a child knows the value of money and "would put it to the true use," then a man could leave the bulk of his fortune to such a child (vol. vi, pp. 132–133). As to the proportion in giving: "Do not stint yourself like a Jew to this or that proportion. Render unto God not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less" (vol. vi, p. 135).

Slavery was flourishing in Wesley's day. But he saw into the matter straight. In his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774) he rejected it with abhorrence by every law of natural right, of justice and mercy. This pamphlet is a thoroughgoing appeal, hitting the nail on the head, as he was wont to do in all ethical ques-

tions with his clear-eyed conscience. "Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion. Be gentle toward all men" (vol. xi, p. 79). His pamphlet upon slavery is a fearful indictment. When the Abolition Committee was formed in 1787, Wesley wrote a letter supporting it heartily (vol. xiii, p. 153, note), and one of his very last letters (February 26, 1791) was to a prominent anti-slavery worker—presumably Wilberforce—praising him for his persevering activity against "that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature" (p. 153).

It is true that when Methodism was established in the West Indies, Wesley forbade his preachers agitating against slavery, which was a regular institution there. In fact, their silence was the only condition on which the existence of their work was possible. But that did not mean that Wesley had changed his mind one iota as to the essential injustice and evil of slavery and the diabolicalness of the slave trade. He retained that attitude to the last.

But how preachers should proceed to get rid of it was another question.

As to the smaller social or personal virtues, Wesley was everywhere insistent. It was a dirty England that he found—he left it cleaner. He was always insisting upon cleanliness. He quotes:

> "Let thy mind's sweetness have its operation
> Upon thy person, clothes, and habitation.

"Use no tobacco unless prescribed by a physician." What have not physicians prescribed! "It is an uncleanly and unwholesome self-indulgence, and the more customary it is the more resolutely you should break off from every degree of that evil custom." "Use no snuff unless prescribed by a physician. I suppose no other nation in Europe is in such vile bondage to this silly, nasty, dirty custom as the Irish are. But let Christians be in this bondage no longer." "Touch no dram. It is liquid fire. It is liquid, though slow, poison." He imputes to drink, snuff and smoky cabins the "blindness which is so exceedingly common throughout the nation" (vol. xii, pp. 250, 251). It is an actual fact that in these minor moralities Wesley upheld an ideal far beyond many

of his followers to-day, both in England and America. In England it is common for Wesleyan Methodist ministers to smoke and occasionally to drink, and up to 1880 smoking was an ordinary practice with Methodist Episcopal ministers. In 1880 a law was passed by the General Conference requiring applicants for the ministry to pledge abstinence from the weed. But in the Church, South, the practice still went on. It was not till May, 1914, that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, went back to Wesley's ideal of cleanliness, so far as to require clerical postulants to give over the filthy habit. It is hardly necessary to say that Methodism is far ahead of other churches in this. In the Roman Catholic, the Protestant Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational churches, tobacco-using ministers are probably the majority of their clergy.

As to practical social helpfulness, Wesley did what he could. What he did you will find in any recent "Life" (the old "Lives" do not pay much attention to this side of Wesley's activity) or in that admirable little book by David D. Thompson, sometime editor of the Northwestern Christian Advocate, *John Wesley as a Social Reformer* (New York and Cincinnati,

1898). He appointed visitors to the sick, similar to our deaconesses. He started the first free medical dispensary; he studied medicine with enthusiasm and often gave free treatment to the poor; he founded a widows' home; he started schools for poor children; he devised a loan fund, "one hundred and fifty years before a similar scheme was begun by philanthropic gentlemen in New York," says Thompson (p. 22), though not before the *Montes Pietatis* were a well-established institution of Catholicism. A cobbler, Lackington, borrowed in 1775 five pounds with which to start a second-hand book shop in connection with his shoe-shop. The book business grew more rapidly than the shoe, and developed into one of the largest second-hand book stores in England!

A result of Wesley's movement was the new intellectual stimulus given to laboring men. They began to read, to speak, to preach, to form unions for self-improvement, finally to form labor organizations to agitate for better conditions. It was the opinion of Professor J. Thorold Rogers, the eminent political economist of Oxford, that agricultural unions could not have been formed in England at all but for the moral and mental uplift given by the humble

Methodist preachers. "I do not believe that the mass of peasants could have been moved at all" had it not been for these prior Methodist organizations. "I have often found that the whole character of a country parish has been changed for the better by the efforts of these rustic missionaries."[4] The local preacher, and not the secularist lecturer, says Fairbairn, has formed the mind of the miner and the laborer, and when the politician addresses the English peasantry he has to appeal to more distinctly ethical and religious principles than when he addresses the upper and middle classes.

Wesley was no socialist. He had no social program, except the Pauline one of humble obedience to the powers that be. He was not a reformer, nor an agitator. He did little more than reecho the words which once sounded down the Jordan valley: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But he was a wide-minded man, with a broad outlook, who took intense interest in everything which touched humanity, with ethical passion, with enthusiasm not only for saving men but for enlarging their lives on all sides. Most of the

[4] *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, London, 1884, 6th ed., 1901, p. 516.

wrongs of the day he struck with burning words; others he condemned unconsciously. His great work was to make men the sons of God in truth. That work went wide and deep into the English race. So it brought it about—or at least it was one of the chief factors in bringing it about—that social, economic, and political reform in England was to go forward in peaceable channels, not by way of cataclysm, as in France then and in Russia now, but by way of quiet but inevitable evolution, as in all English-speaking lands. This result of that mighty movement of which Wesley was, after all, only one of many movers, has been so well expressed by Lecky that I quote his words, and with them close the subject:

> Great as was the importance of the evangelical revival in stimulating these [philanthropic] efforts, it had other consequences of perhaps wider and more enduring influence. Before the close of the century in which it appeared, a spirit had begun to circulate in Europe threatening the very foundations of society and of belief. The revolt against the supernatural theory of Christianity which had been conducted by Voltaire and the encyclopædists; the material conception of man and of the universe, which sprang from the increased study of physical science and from the metaphysics of Condillac and Helvetius; the wild social dreams which Rousseau

had clothed in such transcendent eloquence; the misery of a high-spirited people ground to the dust by unnecessary wars and by partial and unjust taxation; the imbecility and corruption of rulers and priests, had together produced in France a revolutionery spirit which in its intensity and in its proselytizing fervor was unequaled since the days of the Reformation. It was soon felt in many lands. Millions of fierce and ardent natures were intoxicated by dreams of an impossible equality and of complete social and political reorganization. Many old abuses perished, but a tone of thought and feeling was introduced into European life which could only lead to anarchy and at length to despotism, and was beyond all others fatal to that measured and ordered freedom which can alone endure. Its chief characteristics were a hatred of all constituted authority, an insatiable appetite for change, a habit of regarding rebellion as the normal as well as the noblest form of political self-sacrifice, a disdain for all compromise, a contempt for all tradition, a desire to level all ranks and subvert all establishments, a determination to seek progress, not by the slow and cautious amelioration of existing institutions, but by sudden, violent, revolutionary changes. Religion, property, civil authority, and domestic life were all assailed, and doctrines incompatible with the very existence of government were embraced by multitudes with the fervor of a religion. England on the whole escaped the contagion. Many causes conspired to save her, but among them the prominent place must, I believe, be given to the new and vehement religious enthusiasm which was at the very time passing through the middle and lower classes of the people, which had enlisted in the service a large propor-

tion of the wilder and more impetuous reformers, and which recoiled with horror from the anti-Christian tenets that were associated with the Revolution in France—(*A History of England in the 18th Century*. Am. ed., New York, 1883, vol. ii, pp. 691, 692).

II

WESLEY AS THEOLOGIAN

THE catholicity and liberality of Wesley and early Methodism has long been our boast.[1] Let me give one or two quotations among several:

> One circumstance more [says Wesley] is quite peculiar to the people called Methodists—that is the terms upon which any person may be admitted to their society. They do not impose in order to their admission any opinions whatever. Let them hold particular or general redemption, absolute or conditional decrees; let them be Churchmen or Dissenters, Presbyterians or Independents—it is no obstacle. The Presbyterian may be a Presbyterian still; the Independent or Anabaptist may use his own mode of worship; so may the Quaker, and none will contend with him about it. They think and let think. One condition and one only is required—a real desire to save the soul. Where this is, it is enough; they desire no more; they lay stress upon nothing else; they ask only, Is thy heart therein as my heart? If it be give me thy hand.[2]

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[1] See, for instance, in Stevens's *History of the Religious Movement in the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism*, vol. i, pp. 30, 31, and my article on "*Certain Aspects of Early Methodism*," in *Southern Methodist Review*, November, 1887, 179ff.

[2] *Works*, London ed., 14 vols., vol. xiii, p. 266.

After saying that Methodists lay chief stress on the sum of the gospel, love of God and our neighbor, he proceeds:

The Methodists are in no wise bigoted to opinions. They do, indeed, hold right opinions, but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any opinions as to think that these alone will make them Christians, or to confine their affection and esteem to those who agree with them therein. There is nothing they are more fearful of than this, lest it should steal upon them unawares. They contend for nothing trifling as if it were important; for nothing indifferent as if it were necessary; for nothing circumstantial as if it were essential to Christianity; but for everything in its own order.[3]

In his famous tract on *The Character of a Methodist:*

The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgment of one man or of another, are all quite wide of the point. Whosoever, therefore, imagines that a Methodist is a man of such or such an opinion, is grossly ignorant of the whole affair; he mistakes the truth totally. We believe, indeed, that "all scripture is given by the inspiration of God"; and herein we are distinguished from Jews, Turks, and Infidels. We believe the written Word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice; and herein we are fundamen-

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. viii, pp. 206–207.

tally distinguished from those of the Romish Church. We believe Christ to be the eternal, supreme God; and herein we are distinguished from the Socinians and Arians. But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are no distinguishing marks of a Methodist.[4]

It is from such expressions as these that some have drawn the conclusion that Wesley was not only not a theologian, but had no deep interest in doctrinal truth, or in Christianity as truth. Of course Wesley was not a theologian in the sense of Calvin, Hodge, or William B. Pope; but he was a theologian in the sense of being interested in theological discussions, of being at home in them, and of being deeply concerned in theological truth. So interested was he that all his first Conferences (1744 *et seq.*) were taken up with theological discussions in which every man had the right to say his full say. And although Wesley dominated the result and published in the Minutes only what he himself believed, yet his belief was not imposed on the preachers except in the sense that no worker was to inveigh publicly against the doctrinal findings of the Minutes. Later in

[4] *Works*, London ed., 14 vols., vol. viii, p. 340.

Wesley's life those Minutes were made a standard of doctrine. This shows both Wesley's catholicity of spirit and his concern for fundamental Christianity. He was not at all averse to reading the stiff books of systematic theologians. In his MS. diary recently deciphered and published by the Rev. Nehemiah Curnock we notice such entries as these: "Read Calvin." "Read Bull." "Read Baxter." Anyone who has read Wesley's Journal will recall his interest in what he considered the pure gospel. "The plain, genuine gospel runs and is glorified." [5] He hears with grief the slander of Bennet that he (Wesley) "preached nothing but popery; that is, denying justification by faith, and making nothing of Christ." [6] He finds space to publish in his Journal a letter of Thomas Walsh, one of the most saintly and learned of his preachers, refuting at length the Arian view of Christ and proving his deity.[7] He calls his own preaching "the gospel"[8] and he identifies the doctrines he preaches with Christianity. He writes to the high Arian, the Rev. John Taylor, of Norwich (then principal of an academy at Warrington):

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[5] *Journal,* Curnock's Standard ed., vol. iv, p. 141.
[6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid.,* pp. 145–146. [8] *Ibid.,* p. 249.

Take away the scriptural doctrine of redemption, or justification, and that of the new birth, the beginning of sanctification, or, which amounts to the same thing, explain them as you do, suitably to your doctrine of original sin; and what is Christianity better than heathenism? Wherein (save in rectifying some of our notions) has the religion of St. Paul any preeminence over that of Socrates or Epictetus! Either I or you mistake the whole of Christianity from the beginning to the end. Either my scheme or yours is as contrary to the scriptural as the Koran is. Is it mine or yours? Yours has gone through all England, and made numerous converts. I attack it from end to end; let all England judge whether it can be defended or not.[9]

In a letter to *The Westminster Journal* in 1761 he answers to the charge of being an "enthusiast" in these words:

What do you mean by the term? A believer in Jesus Christ? An assertor of his equality with the Father, and of the entire Christian revelation? Do you mean one who maintains the antiquated doctrines of the new birth and just justification by faith? Then I am an enthusiast.[10]

There is an interesting entry March 16, 1764:

I met several serious clergymen. I have long desired that there might be an open, avowed union between all who preach those fundamental truths, Original Sin and Justification by Faith, producing inward and outward

[9] *Journal,* Curnock's Standard ed., vol. iv, pp. 327–328.
[10] *Ibid.,* vol. iv, p. 428.

holiness; but all my endeavors have been hitherto ineffectual. God's time is not fully come.[11]

He sent a circular letter proposing a union of those who believed in "(1) Original Sin, (2) Justification by Faith, (3) Holiness of Heart and Life; provided their life [that is, the lives of those united] be answerable to their doctrine."[12] An interesting thing about this program is how it smacks of old-fashioned evangelicalism—no High Church doctrines, no Broad Church evaporations after the fashion of the Presbyterian liberal Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, but just the old, simple doctrines of original sin, justification by faith only, and holiness, held by the Evangelicals. The solid orthodoxy of Wesley is witnessed to in his advising a student in Oxford to read up Bull's Companion for Candidates for Holy Orders and Bishop Pearson On the Creed, two of the stanchest divines on the main doctrines that the Church of England ever reared. They are as far away from anything latitudinarian as the east is from the west. I have not the least doubt that Wesley would have instantly dismissed from his service any preacher who denied original sin, justification by faith, the atonement, the deity of

[11] *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 47. [12] *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 61.

Christ, etc., that is, any of the fundamental articles held by the Protestant churches of his day. But that does not mean that he would have dismissed any who holding to these yet differed from Wesley on points not vital. For instance, take Calvinism. Though Wesley abhorred the Calvinist doctrine of decrees with a hatred inherited from his father and increased by his own studies and work, yet he allowed full swing to preachers of that doctrine in his societies so long as they were *en rapport* with the general cause. When some one charged that some of his best preachers had been thrust out because they dissented from him on these things, Wesley denied it. "There has not been a single instance of this kind. Two or three (but far from *the best* of our preachers) voluntarily left us after they had embraced those opinions. But it was of their own mere motion."[13] Wesley knew how to distinguish between opinions which might be held with hearty loyalty to the gospel (such as Calvinism) and those which undermine the citadel. He goes to Warrington, where his old theological opponent, Dr. John Taylor, had been principal of the academy, and where John Seddon was

[13] *Journal*, Curnock's Standard ed., vol. v, p. 116 (1765).

at this time influencing town and academy toward Unitarianism. "About noon I preached in Warrington; I am afraid, not to the taste of some of my hearers, as my subject led me to speak strongly and explicitly on the Godhead of Christ. But that I cannot help, for on this I *must* insist as the foundation of all our hope." [14]

Speaking roughly, all Wesley's writings were occasional, called out to meet some exigency or demand, or some daily impulse. The only one that has the formality of a long deliberate treatise is his *The Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason and Experience*, of which the preface is dated November 30, 1756. This, however, has only 162 pages, while there are added to it long extracts from other writers defending the same side, namely, 44 pages from Watts's *The Ruin and Recovery of Human Nature* (1740); 37 pages from tracts on the same general subject by the Rev. Samuel Hebden; and 31 pages from Boston's *Fourfold State of Man* (1720), Wesley dating his addition of these in March and August, 1757. Wesley's treatise is a reply to *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1738, many later editions), an able work written in fine spirit by Dr. John Taylor,

[14] *Ibid.*, vol. v, pp. 253–254.

already mentioned, the high Arian Presbyterian pastor of Norwich, the same work which called out the celebrated *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, by Jonathan Edwards, finished in May, 1757 (working on it in the wilds of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, at the same time as Wesley was completing his), and published after his premature death in 1758.

The first part of Wesley's treatise is taken up with a refutation of the goodness of human nature drawn from history, first the past, then the present. He quotes from Juvenal and other Roman writers to prove that man has been fearfully corrupt, and gives various facts or incidents in Roman history. As to the present, he takes the heathen first, and he draws a dark picture of their state. He gives interesting facts that he learned from the Indians in America. All this part of his work is most interesting, something like the description of a traveler. He then considers the Mohammedans. "Why is it that such numbers of Turks and Persians have stabbed one another in cold blood? Truly, because they differ in the manner of dressing their head." The Greek Christians came next, and then the

Roman Catholic, and finally the Protestant, and in each case there are some frank disclosures of depravity, which go to show that man is pretty well out of joint. All this part of his work (about 43 pages) is something like a fascinating treatise in sociology, geography, or history, and is an illustration of one of Wesley's characteristics as a man, a theologian, and a writer, namely, his wonderful intellectual curiosity and respect for facts as he finds them. It is as though he said, "What you say against the doctrine of depravity is not true, because history, travel, etc., show that men have been and are depraved."

Wesley then turns to find out the reason for this universal spread of evil. After showing that education cannot explain it, because education itself has to be explained, he turns to the Scriptures, and proves from them that the ordinary doctrine of the origin of sin in the transgression of our first parents is the true one. He does this all the more readily, for Taylor built on the Bible just as implicitly as Wesley. This part of the argument is taken up with brief citations from Taylor and as brief refutations. There is no sustained and continued argument, as in a systematic theology, but only these

clever parryings of Taylor's scriptural exegesis. He also gives long quotations from Jennings's refutation of Taylor. In passing he praises the Westminster Assembly's Larger Catechism: "I think it is in the main a very excellent composition, which I shall therefore cheerfully endeavor to defend" (p. 261). Wesley does not hold that men are condemned here and hereafter for Adam's sin alone, but for their own "outward and inward sins, which through their own fault spring from the infection of their nature" (p. 286). From this whole thrust-and-parry treatise it appears that Wesley stood squarely with the ordinary view that all human sin and misery sprang from Adam's sin; that children were involved in it too and would be lost in case they died were it not for Christ's redemption; that Adam was the federal head of mankind; that God does not create man now except through the laws of nature; that the sinful acts of men are done through the power of God, but the sinful parts or elements of those acts are done by man alone; that the evil tempers of infants are sinful, etc. Wesley was no new theologian or "liberal" on depravity and its related doctrines, but stood on the Reformation creeds (doctrine of decrees alone excepted).

He accuses Taylor of "destroying the inward kingdom of God, sapping the foundations of primitive scriptural Christianity" (p. 432). In holding that mere formal Christians will be saved he is deceiving them. "So they live and die without the knowledge, love, or image of God; and die eternally" (p. 433). You must get down to the root of the life, and get the regenerating work done there.[15]

In logical agility in meeting an opponent by following up closely what he says Wesley was strong. But there was no large thorough discussion of the question itself.

Wesley nowhere faces the question of the inspiration of the Scripture—a question which played such a large part in the last half of the 19th century. In his day it was not a question. Even the Arians or "liberals" of the day received its full inspiration, and argued as though it were the Word of God. How far it is inspired, its alleged errors of fact, its contradictions, and all the questions threshed over later, were hardly up then. In fact, in 1823, when Watson published his *Theological Institutes* on which our fathers were nurtured, he found no occasion to go into this subject. The Scriptures'

[15] For this treatise, see *Works*, vol. ix, p. 191ff.

full inspiration was taken as a matter of course, and the necessity of a scientific treatment of that inspiration never occurred to them. In the preface of his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (1754) Wesley says: "The Scripture of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and altogether are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess. It is the fountain of heavenly wisdom which they who are able to taste prefer to all writings of men, however wise, or learned, or holy. God speaks not as man but as God. His thoughts are very deep: and thence his words are of inexhaustible virtue. And the language of his messengers also is exact to the highest degree: for the words which were given them accurately answered the impression made upon their minds. And hence Luther says, 'Divinity is nothing but a grammar of the language of the Holy Ghost' " (paragraphs 10, 12). It is evident that Wesley took their inspiration in the largest sense as practically covering both language and content. This explains that famous and most characteristic passage which occurs in the preface to the first volume of his Sermons (no date, but 1747), a

passage in which his inmost soul is revealed, the very philosophy of his life.

I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God. I have it: here is knowledge for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.[16] Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence I open, I read this book: for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights—Lord, is it not thy word, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God"? Thou "givest liberally and upbraidest not." Thou hast said, "If any man be willing to do thy will, he shall know." I am willing to do: let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." [17]

If any man was ever a Bible Christian, he was Wesley, and it was with both historic and spiritual justification that a branch of his followers

[16] A man of one book.

[17] *Works*, vol. v, p. 34.

called themselves, when they organized in 1815, "The Bible Christians." None of the minimizing views of inspiration so common nowadays —some of them even among Methodists— would have found any favor with the founder.

On the other hand, on critical questions not involving the religious value of the Bible, Wesley spoke with freedom. On the genealogies of Christ he says:

> If there were any difficulties in this genealogy [that in Matthew], or that given in St. Luke, which could not easily be removed, they would rather affect the Jewish tables than the credit of the evangelists; for they act only as historians setting down these genealogies as they stood in those public and allowed records. Therefore they were to take them as they found them. Nor was it needful that they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. They unquestionably prove the grand point of view, that Jesus was of the family from which the promised seed was to come.[18]

It is as though Wesley said: I don't know nor care whether the genealogies are accurate or not. I am only interested in affirming the honesty of the evangelists in transcribing them, and their practical value in relation to Jesus. He also freely acknowledges the error in Matt. 27. 9:

[18] *Notes on New Testament,* 1754, on Matthew 1.

"The word 'Jeremy,' which was added to the text in later copies, and thence received into many translations, is evidently a mistake: for he who spoke what St. Matthew here cites (or rather paraphrases) was not Jeremy, but Zechariah." Wesley is mistaken in saying that the word "Jeremiah" was added in later copies, as it is in the oldest copies; and where it was later omitted that was due to the fact that the passage was not in Jeremiah. But in spite of this Wesley himself omits it.

This violent dealing with the text is met by his moral independence of it. In his treatment of predestination, by which he means the doctrine that God ordains men to eternal life or death irrespective of their faith or life as causes or conditions, he says that the Bible simply cannot teach such a God as that. "Let it [Scripture] mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works; that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination." [19]

It is well known that in sending over a revision of the Church of England Prayer Book he not

[19] *Works*, vol. vii, p. 333 (Sermon 128).

only cut it down and revised it, but abridged the Psalms and omitted passages which he said were not fit for a Christian congregation.

This corresponds with a general liberality of feeling which made Dean Stanley call Wesley the father of Broad Churchmen and which made a Methodist clergyman write an article, "Early Methodism Rationalistic."[20] "Every wise man will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires them to allow him; and will no more insist on embracing his opinions than he would have them insist on his embracing theirs. . . . One must follow the dictates of his own conscience in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind, and then act according to the best light he has. No one can constrain another, and every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God."[21] He put high store by reason. His words scoring Luther for depreciating reason are often quoted. To him reason is the handmaid of the gospel—

[20] William I. Gill, pastor at Madison, New Jersey, when the present writer was a student at Drew—later at Lawrence, Massachusetts, and the author of able books. The above article appears in *The Methodist Review of the Church South*, January, 1886, pp. 93–107.

[21] *Works*, vol. v, pp. 495–496 (Sermon 39).

"that power of apprehending, judging, and discoursing, which is no more to be condemned in the gross than seeing, hearing or feeling." [22] The same spirit leads him to strongly condemn Calvin in the Servetus case.[23] "I read to-day part of the meditations of Marcus Antoninus. What a strange heathen! Giving thanks to God for all the good things he enjoys, in particular for his good inspirations, and for twice revealing to him in dreams things whereby he was cured of otherwise incurable distempers. I make no doubt that this is one of those 'Many who shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac,' while nominal Christians are cast out."[24] And that tremendous challenge in his Farther Appeal to men of Reason and Religion, when it was objected to the Methodists that they hold opinions "which I [the objector] cannot believe are true," and Wesley replies:

> I answer, Believe them true or false; I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God, that you know and love the Lord

[22] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 315 (*Journal*, June, 1741).

[23] *Works*, vol. vi, p. 201. On Wesley's judgment of Calvin, see Faulkner in *Methodist Review*, New York, July, 1910, pp. 640–642.

[24] *Journal*, October 11, 1745.

Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions. I am weary to bear them. My soul loaths this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me an humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of.

Then in answer to the objection that people are brought by Methodists "into several erroneous opinions," Wesley says:

It matters not a straw whether they are or no; (I speak of such opinions as do not touch the foundation;) it is scarce worth while to spend ten words about it. Whether they embrace this religious opinion or that is no more concern to me than whether they embrace this or that system of astronomy. Are they brought to holy tempers and holy lives? This is mine, and it should be your inquiry; since on this both social and personal happiness depend, happiness temporal and eternal. Are they brought to the love of God and the love of the neighbor? Pure religion undefiled is this. How long will you "darken counsel by words without knowledge"? The plain religion now propagated is *Love*. And can you oppose this without being an enemy to mankind?[25]

This does not mean at all that he was indif-

[25] *Farther Appeal*, etc., part 3, iv, par. 10 and 14 (*Works*, vol. viii, pp. 244–246).

ferent to truth, for which he fought many times; but when men were opposing and even persecuting the Methodists because they disliked the opinions of the latter, he said: "Remove your emphasis, gentlemen. Ask not what are our opinions, but what are our lives? Do we make the world better? If so, do not oppose us so bitterly." This was also in accordance with Wesley's fundamental position that the salvation of heathens and heretics depended not on their opinions but on whether, according to their light, they feared God or the gods and worked righteousness. But as to Christian doctrine, and the necessity of keeping Methodists true to the essentials of it, Wesley was deeply concerned. Even in the sermon on "Catholic Spirit" he guards himself carefully:

> From hence we may learn, First, That a catholic spirit is not *speculative* latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions: this is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being "driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine" is a great curse, not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend to true catholicism. A man of truly catholic spirit has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun in his judgment concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine. It is true he is always ready to hear and weigh whatsoever can be

offered against his principles; but as this does not show any wavering in his own mind, so neither does it occasion any. He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavor to blend them into one.[26]

So also in regard to worship, the catholic spirit finds which mode of worship is both "scriptural" and "rational," and "cleaves close thereto," "without rambling hither and thither." "He is fixed in his congregation as well as his principles."[27]

Wesley's reverence for the letter of the Old Testament was such that he made God the author of earthquakes, and looked upon them as punishments for sin. He quotes Job 9. 5, 6; Psalms 104. 32; 107. 5; Nah. 1. 5, 6 to prove that God sends earthquakes, and Psalms 18.7; Isa. 13. 11, 13; 24. 1, 18–20; Psalms 114. 7 to prove that they are a judgment on sin. "Nothing can be more express than these Scripture testimonies, which determine both the cause and author of this terrible calamity. But reason as well as faith doth sufficiently assure us it must be the punishment of sin, and the effect of that curse which was brought upon the earth by the original transgression. Steadfastness must be no longer

[26] *Works*, vol. v, pp. 502–503 (Sermon 39). [27] *Ibid.*

looked for in the world, since innocency is banished thence. But we cannot conceive that the universe should have been disturbed by these furious accidents during the state of original righteousness. Wherefore should God's anger have armed the elements against his faithful subjects?"[28] But Wesley was inconsistent here. The Bible presupposed the Ptolemaic astronomy, yet he repudiated it and accepted the Copernican.[29] If it had been shown to Wesley that earthquakes were entirely the result of natural law, he would have modified his view that they were sent directly by God as a punishment. His amenability to what he considered fact or what was proved to be fact, was thoroughly characteristic.

It was this same reverence (see Rom. 8. 19-23) which led him to his notorious views of the final happiness of the whole brute creation.

It must be remembered that this conception of the Bible as the Word of God was a part of the legacy of both the Reformation and Puritanism, was not denied then by the Unitarians,

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[28] *Works*, vol. vii, pp. 387-388 (Sermon 129).

[29] See the evidence in full, over against McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant*, 1911, p. 173, by Faulkner, in *Methodist Review*, New York, November, 1912, pp. 954-956.

was engraved on the heart of the English people, and was the necessary background of Wesley's work. It was because he could appeal to it that he succeeded. Historically Methodism is unthinkable without it.

As to the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ it is hardly necessary to say that Wesley was as solid as Gibraltar. If you will turn to his notes on 1 John 5. 6–12, you will see that he not only receives the Trinity in the fullest sense, but even accepts and defends the famous verse 7 which all scholars now know and some knew then to be spurious: "And there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." "They are one in essence, in knowledge, in will, and in their testimony" (on verse 8). He believes the Trinity because revealed, but on the *manner* of the Trinity he believes nothing, because not revealed. The passage about all men honoring the Son even as they honor the Father (John 5. 23) he takes as one evidence of the Trinity, and he quotes a letter of Socinus to a friend: "I do not know what to do with my untoward followers. They will not worship Jesus Christ. I tell them it is written, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' They answer, 'If he is not

God, we dare not worship him. For it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' " This was decisive with Wesley. Not only so; he thought that the "knowledge of the Three—One God is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion." He quotes the Marquis de Renty: "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity," but adds, "I apprehend this is not the experience of 'babes,' but rather 'fathers in Christ.' "[30] He goes so far as to say:

> I know not how anyone can be a Christian believer till he "hath . . . the witness in himself"; . . . till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son, and, having this witness, he honors the Son and the blessed Spirit even as he honors the Father. Not that every Christian believer *adverts* to this; perhaps at first not one in twenty; but if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find it is implied in what he believes. Therefore I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion who denies that these Three are One. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved during their unbelief; (unless on the footing of honest heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance), but that God, before they

[30] *Works*, vol. vi, pp. 205. Comp. xiii., 77; xii, 352.

go hence, will "bring them to the knowledge of the truth." [31]

This does not mean that Wesley held that anyone must receive his explanation or philosophy of the Trinity (though he had no philosophy of it), but only the fact of it. "I insist on no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean that which is given in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius." [32] The robustness of Wesley's Trinitarianism is evidenced by this tremendous creed, even its damnatory clauses. These clauses he first scrupled, till he considered that they relate to only willful unbelievers, and only to the *substance* of the doctrine, not the philosophical illustrations of it. He did not only not insist on any theories of the Trinity, but he expressly differentiated in this sermon between right opinion or orthodoxy and religion. "Persons may be truly religious and hold wrong opinions" —burning and shining lights, yet Roman Catholics or Calvinists. He also distinguished between essential and non-essential truths. "There are some truths more important than

[31] *Works*, vol. vi, pp. 204–206 (Sermon 55, on 1 John 5. 7; 1775, and immediately printed).

[32] The Quicunque Vult, the so called Athanasian Creed.

others. . . . There are some which it more nearly concerns us to know, as having a clear connection with vital religion." But among these he recognizes the Trinity. He does not, however, insist on the word "Trinity" or "Person." He uses them himself, because he knows of none better, but he does not insist on them. "I would only insist on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text: 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one' " (pp. 199-201).

Over against his doubt as to the salvation of Unitarians as expressed in this sermon, his words as to Firmin are often alleged. He published in *Arminian Magazine* an Extract from the Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin (1786), and he put in the following preface:

> I was exceedingly struck, at reading the following Life, having long settled it in my mind that the entertaining of wrong notions concerning the Trinity was inconsistent with real piety. But I cannot argue against matter of fact. I dare not deny that Mr. Firmin was a pious man; although his notions of the Trinity were quite erroneous.[33]

This oft quoted sentence is most welcome as showing a mellowing of Wesley's views as he

[33] *Works*, vol. xiv, p. 293.

grew toward the end, but it does not at all justify the use sometimes made of it. My learned friend, the Rev. Dr. James Roy, in his able book, *Catholicity and Methodism: or the Relation of John Wesley to Modern Thought* (Montreal, 1877), a book which burst like a bombshell in the camp of the Methodist Church in Canada, goes much too far in holding that the Firmin passage means that Wesley had abandoned the Athanasian creed and its explanations (pp. 76–78). Nothing of the kind. Wesley never abandoned either the one or the other. He held to the end to the explanations as the best ever offered, as evinced by his republication of his sermon in 1788; he only repudiated them as compulsory tests of orthodoxy, holding still to the fact of the Trinity as a test both of orthodoxy and of salvation. Nor does his reference to Firmin as a pious man mean that he had abandoned his views or his appreciation of them. It merely means that since his High Church youth, he had widely enlarged his conception of piety. That conception had so broadened that it had entirely sprung his old limits of interpreting piety by opinions or doctrines, instead of interpreting piety by life, by fruits, as Christ did. That is

all it means. But that growth he had already attained in 1775, when he preached the Trinity sermon, because in that very sermon he makes the distinction later made in the Firmin passage; namely, that right opinions do not make religion, that people may believe many false beliefs and yet be truly religious. As to piety, as to doing good, as to casting out devils, Wesley was wonderfully catholic—let people go ahead and do all the good they could. He said he would convict himself of bigotry by forbidding "Papists" or Socinians casting out devils; in fact, he added, if he "should see a Jew, a Deist, or a Turk doing the same, were I to forbid him either directly or indirectly, I should be no better than a bigot still." [34] As to the salvation of all such earnest and pious folk, he believed that probably before or at their death the true God would be revealed to them.

As to atonement there was hardly any difference of opinion among orthodox Christians in Wesley's day. He took the general view for granted. What was it? It was the view of the Reformation creeds—the penal satisfaction theory. The moral influence theory, the gov-

[34] Sermon 38, "A Caution Against Bigotry," *Works*, vol. v, p. 491.

ernmental theory, or any theory which did not guard a real objective propitiation paid to God for the sins of man never occurred to Wesley. If it had, he would have instantly rejected it. He takes the references in Isaiah 53 as literally fulfilled in Christ. His righteousness is imputed to us. He represents us and by his sacrifice he reconciles God to men so far that if they believe they will receive peace. Wesley nowhere treats atonement, but he everywhere takes for granted the old doctrine. For that reason among others, till well along in the second half of the nineteenth century there was no thought of any variation from that doctrine in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the old country or in the Methodist Episcopal Church here. I think the first who made a break was a professor in Drew Theological Seminary, Dr. John Miley, who came there to succeed his brother-in-law, Dr. Randolph S. Foster, when the latter became a bishop in 1872, and who in 1879 published his book on *The Atonement in Christ*, which revolutionized Methodist opinion in America. As is known, Miley repudiated any real necessity for atonement at all, so far as God was concerned, reviving the view of Socinus. God might have forgiven

without atonement had it not been for an onlooking universe. But as a ruler of angels and men such a gratuitous favor would have disrupted their sense of justice, reverence, respect. And so to keep that, to preserve his place as governor, Christ came and gave a real atonement, or what answered for a real atonement; but at the bottom the only necessity was the interests of his government. The satisfaction of divine justice did not require it (Miley, p. 156), nor the divine veracity (pp. 158ff.), nor judicial rectitude (pp. 162ff.). The necessity is a "salutary rectoral influence," governmental rectitude (p. 167). I think that was the first time a break ever came in the Methodist tradition of atonement, the regular Reformation view (both Lutherans and Reformed) that Christ gave a real objective atonement for sin to the divine justice and holiness. I say the break was revolutionary, for if there is no necessity for redemption in the eternal veracities of God's being, is there any in propitiating the respect of a witnessing world? If God could get round himself, could he not get round his poor creatures? If once you throw overboard a spiritual atonement having its roots in the divine nature, how long will you keep a

spectacular atonement having its impulse in a reaction from gazing angels, devils and men? O yes, 1879 saw a sea-change in Methodist theology, and Drew Theological Seminary—the supposed seat of conservatism—did it.

As to justification, Wesley said at the first Conference (1744), "To be justified is to be pardoned and received into God's favor; into such a state that if we continue therein, we shall be finally saved." The righteousness of Christ is imputed, says Wesley, to those that believe and when they believe. Then they are forgiven and accepted wholly and only for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. Luther could not affirm more strongly than Wesley that we are justified by faith only, and like Luther he insisted that this faith inevitably produced good works.[35] Wesley at one time revolted against Luther's Commentary on Galatians,[36] but it was because he did not understand Luther. And in 1770 he published his unfortunate Minute on justification in a reaction against the extreme consequences to which some carried the *sola fides* (faith alone),

[35] *Works*, vol. v, pp. 60ff. (see the whole sermon, no. 5, 53-64).
[36] *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 315–316.

a minute which was naturally though wrongly interpreted as a rejection of the evangelical basis of Methodism as founded like the Reformation on justification by faith alone. Some of the stanchest and most pious friends of Wesley and his movement were scandalized. The next year he and his Conference issued an explanation, in which they said:

> We have no trust or confidence but in the alone merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for justification or salvation either in life, death or the day of judgment. And though none is a real Christian believer (and consequently cannot be saved) who doeth not good works, where there is time and opportunity; yet our works have no part in meriting or purchasing our justification, from first to last, either in whole or in part. (Signed by Wesley and 53 preachers.)

If there was ever a declaration in the true spirit of Luther, that was one. In fact, hardly anything could show Wesley's separation from his High Church days and the gulf between him and the Oxford reformers of 1833 than the hearty way in which he accepted Christ's and Paul's and Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. That has been a special *bête noire* to all so called Catholics, and for that reason Luther has been anathema to them.

As to the Church Wesley was also Low Church. According to the Scripture, he says, a Church of Christ is either a company of two or more Christian believers meeting together (a family or otherwise), a congregation of Christians in a place, or several congregations in a town considered collectively, or all the congregations on earth, as in Acts 20. 28, where, says Wesley, it means "the catholic or universal church." All these are a real Church of Christ. Members of it (or them) have one Lord, Christ, "whom to obey is their glory and joy;" one faith, namely, the faith which says to Christ with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and with Paul, "The life I live I live by faith in the Son of God"; one baptism, the "outward sign of all that inward and spiritual grace which the one Lord is continually bestowing upon his church," and not in this passage the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that being included in the "one Spirit." Wherever there are people with this character, they belong to the catholic, or universal, church. Wesley does not like the definition of the nineteenth article of the thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England ("The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God

is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered"), because it is too exclusive. He says:

> I dare not exclude from the Church catholic all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines which cannot be affirmed to be the pure word of God are sometimes, yea, frequently preached; neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not duly administered. Certainly, if these things are so, the Church of Rome is not so much as part of the catholic Church, seeing therein neither is the pure word of God preached nor the sacraments duly administered. Whoever they are that have one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all, I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship. Nor would I on these accounts scruple to include them within the pale of the Catholic Church; neither would I have any objection to receive them if they desired it as members of the Church of England.[37]

You will notice that in this Wesley was much more liberal than some of his followers, who deny the Roman Catholic Church to be a branch of the Church of Christ, even than the Methodist Episcopal Church, which in the strength of that virtual denial refuses to accept Roman Catholic orders, but reordains Roman

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[37] *Works*, vol. vi, p. 397. Quotations just before, 392–396 (Sermon 74).

Catholic priests. This is all the more illiberal, because the validity of Methodist orders in an ecclesiastical sense goes back to the validity of Roman Catholic orders. The Roman Catholic clergy who came over to Protestantism in the Reformation were never reordained, but they themselves gave orders to the ministers of the Church of England, which gave them to Methodism. Wesley's tremendous emphasis on piety and the life of inner faith in Christ as shown in holy living broke entirely the High Church view of the church as an ecclesiastical corporation founded on the threefold order of bishops, presbyters ("priests") and deacons, guaranteed by a succession of episcopal ordinations going back to the apostles. If the Quakers had only received baptism, they would have come in here on the extreme left, as the Roman Catholic and Greek Christians did on the extreme right. "Can anything, then, be more absurd than for men to cry out, 'The Church, the Church,' and to pretend to be very zealous for it, while they themselves have neither part in a lot therein, nor, indeed, know what the Church is?" (p. 400). He is referring to Anglicans who oppose his work on ecclesiastical grounds and who are themselves not true mem-

bers of the church, because not real Christians in heart and life.

I heard in New York a sermon by a Methodist clergyman on "*The Passing of Hell.*" He said the old literal hell had gone, the hell that we got from Saint Augustine, by him handed down to the Middle Ages and thence to the Reformation and modern times. Wesley was the first to strike it by his doctrine of divine Fatherhood, of love, and universal salvation; and after Wesley (he said) Charles Kingsley, Frederic W. Robertson, Frederic Denison Maurice, Horace Bushnell, and Henry Ward Beecher and D. L. Moody had worked nobly in the same direction. The old hell had passed and he was glad of it. Let it pass, he cried. That brings up Wesley's real views on the Last Things. Wesley's high view of Scripture led him to interpret almost if not entirely literally the passages relating to the future. The modern way of getting the spiritual or inner kernel of truth in the vivid imagery of the East and the sensuous, startling representations of the other life, as well as in the teachings of those and other matters by theologians and churches—this modern way which we owe mostly, perhaps, to Robertson and Maurice, Wesley never dreamed

of. He took the Scripture as he found it. Only when absolutely necessary did he interpret anything as figurative. If one reads Sermon 15, "The Great Assize" (vol. v, pp. 185ff.) published in pamphlet immediately after it was preached in 1758, it will be seen how literally he takes all these matters. He believes in a literal general Judgment with a vengeance. The literal end of the world by fire; a literal resurrection of one's own body, though changed in properties (not in substance); apparently a literal "great white throne high exalted above the earth;" a literal standing of the dead, small and great, before the Judgment seat; a literal unveiling of every evil thought, word, and deed as well as every good one; a literal sentence passed on the righteous and the wicked (a sentence which he says, "must remain fixed and umovable as the throne of God"); a literal going of the one part to glory and of the other to hell—nothing is minimized, nothing is spiritualized, nothing is volatilized into thin air. The whole fearful picture Wesley accepts at its face value. The only figurative expression he allows is that about the books being opened (p. 173). The rest he takes as literally true.

Nor was Wesley at all indisposed to use the evangelist's custom of painting hell in colors not at all rosy, but in this case, at any rate, painting exactly as he believed.

"The wicked will be cast into the lake of fire," he says, "burning with brimstone, originally prepared for the devil and his angels, where they will gnaw their tongues for anguish and pain; they will curse God and look upward. There the dogs of hell—pride, malice, revenge, rage, horror, despair—continually devour them. There they have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever" (p. 179).

Those in the "unhappy division of Hades will remain there, howling and blaspheming, cursing and looking upward till they are cast into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (vol. vii, p. 327). "What a prison is there [in the world below]! 'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fire.' And what inhabitants! What horrid, fearful shapes, emblems of the rage against God and man, the envy, fury, despair, fixed within, causing them to gnash their teeth at him they so long despised" (p. 323). All their pleasures are gone. There is now "nothing new, but one unvaried

scene of horror upon horror. There is no music but that of groans and shrieks, of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; of curses and blasphemies against God, or cutting reproaches of one another" (vol. vi, p. 383).

He allows a figurative reference in the worm, for he says, "The first thing intended by the worm that never dieth seems to be a guilty conscience, including self condemnation, sorrow, remorse, and a sense of the wrath of God" (p. 385). All unholy passions, tempers and horrors will incessantly gnaw the soul, as the vulture did the liver of Tityus (*ibid.*).

Then how awful the eternity of it! The damned can say, "I am all over pain, and I shall be never eased of it. I lie under exquisite torment of body and horror of soul, and I shall feel it forever" (p. 391). The idea of a purgatory of any kind Wesley expressly repudiated (vol. vii, pp. 252, 247, 327; vol. x, pp. 98, 99, etc).

If therefore anyone thinks that Wesley helped the passing of hell, he is mistaken. I have quoted only a part of his burning descriptions, his realistic warnings of the sinners of England against the everlasting fire. If you will read his sermon "Of Hell" (Sermon 73, vol. vi, pp. 381ff.), or "On Eternity" (Sermon

54), or his "Dives" sermon (Sermon 112), you will soon find out that Wesley was no "liberal" on future punishment.[38] So far from helping along the passing of the old-fashioned hell, there were few men in modern times who did more to make it still a living thing and send it far into the nineteenth century as one of the most undisputed principles of evangelical theology.

In 1884 I sent to England for a little pamphlet, *Conjectures Concerning the Nature of Future Happiness*, Translated from the French of Monsieur Bonnet of Geneva, together with Letter and Notes of John Wesley (Manchester: Woodhead, 1884, 15 pp.). This was the Letter:

To the Reader

Dublin, April 7, 1787.

I am happy in communicating to men of Sense in this Kingdom, and at a very low price, one of the most sensible tracts I ever read. John Wesley.

Bonnet's pamphlet contains curious speculations about the future life, and among other things he anticipates the complete restoration of all living beings to the harmony and love of God. From this it was thought by some that

[38] Or look under "Hell" in Index to last London ed. of his *Works*.

Wesley had changed his view about hell. But this was a premature conclusion. After 1787 he published sentiments like those I have quoted before, or allowed them to be published. Wesley had not changed his view. It was his wont to pick up curious and edifying pieces of literature and republish them in cheap form, and without necessarily indorsing all they contained. His sending out the tract of Bonnet was partly on account of its speculations on the future of the brute creation, in which Wesley was much interested and in which he agreed with him. When I was younger, I laid too much stress on this tract,[39] but further study of Wesley has corrected me. It does not affect at all the strong drift of his stalwart orthodoxy on hell.

The reader who has gone over the above facts will not be surprised at Wesley's concern for the soundness of his preachers. And this in spite of his oft-quoted "Think and let think." In general tolerance and catholicity of feeling he was (as said above) among the widest-minded men of his day who were yet of earnest Christian conviction. Though he fought Catholi-

[39] See my article in *The Christian Register* (Boston, January 15, 1885).

cism, Calvinism, and quietist Moravianism, it was only in the free forum of discussion, and involved no persecuting narrowness, as he shows in the "Think and let think" phrase. A certain bishop was persecuting the Methodists,[40] and Wesley wrote to him one of his finest letters. It begins, "I am a dying man," and is a noble plea not to persecute the Methodists or drive them out of the church, even if he does not agree with them. "You are a man of sense; you are a man of learning; nay, I verily believe (what is of infinitely more value) you are a man of piety. Then think and let think. I pray God,"[41] etc. The "Think and let think" is a plea for tolerance, so far as persecution is concerned. But, at the bottom, only so far, as we have already seen as to Wesley's attitude to the emancipation of Catholics.[42]

In regard to the terms of admission to his societies Wesley boasted over and over again that anyone desiring salvation was freely

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[40] On the persecution of the Methodists see the very valuable book by Barr, *Early Methodists Under Persecution*, 1916, and the review of it by Faulkner in *Methodist Review*, New York, September, 1916, pp. 834-835.

[41] Eayrs, *Letters of John Wesley*, 1916, pp. 135, 136. See also in *Works*, vol. viii, p. 340; vol. xiii, 240.

[42] See above, p. 21.

admitted, whatever his theological views (see above, pp. 36-8). In fact, that was one of the things he most prided himself on to offset the frequent charge that he was building a rival church. How could he be building an ecclesiasticism over against the Church of England when he had hardly any doctrinal tests whatever to his societies, but anybody could be admitted, Quaker or Presbyterian, and still attend his own church, or even be urged or required to attend his own? Wesley was right: it is the fashion of hierarchies and big churchly corporations to put up high doctrinal bars to membership, as witness the decisions of the Council of Trent and the Creed of Pius IV on the one side, the voluminous creeds of the Reformed Churches in the center, and the twenty-five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church (made a test of membership in 1864, and still kept up even as late as 1916) on the other side. The apostolic simplicity was far too daring for our timid ecclesiastics: the confession of Christ as Lord, and baptism in his name. That was the open door of the church for a hundred or more years, but the day of the high bars closed that golden morning. Fox and Wesley had the vision to

restore it, and to boast of restoring it. And Wesley's contention that his were only societies and not churches, while perfectly sincere and on the surface true, did not rob him of the honor of that restoration. For look: Wesley's societies had their own times and places of worship, their own ministers, who baptized the converts in these places of worship and administered the Lord's Supper to them there, their own rules, their own hymns and hymn books, and after 1784 partially their own liturgy—some half dozen or more distinct notes of a separate church. But this religious connection which Wesley deliberately aimed to make world-wide, he absolutely and to the very end refused to limit by any dogmatic tests of membership. And his followers in Great Britain, Canada, and Australasia, and many of those in the United States, have been true to him in this fidelity to the church as Christ and the apostles left it.

But Wesley distinguished between members and the preachers or official instructors of Christian truth. Not, of course, that the former were to be left to every wind of doctrine. He guarded against that with extreme care. Only he guarded against it in the New Testa-

ment way by experience, instruction, work, and not by the doctrinal bar at the entrance. But for preachers he was more specific. In order to clarify their theological ideas and give unity to their teaching he discussed doctrines in all his Conferences, and entered the results on the Minutes. Those results were dictated by himself. Legally, he, and he alone, was the Conference. His brother Charles he associated with himself in important documents, but it was like the inscriptions in Paul's letters —Silas or Sosthenes or others may be there, but everybody knows that it is Paul's soul alone that burns like a living fire through the words. A little handful of brother clergy who were with him in the movement are deferred to, and the lay preachers—at least those at the heads of circuits, the "assistants"—are invited and have perfect liberty to take part in the discussions, but it is Wesley alone who is responsible for the final shaping of the doctrinal or ecclesiastical deposit. Though he did not demand conformity to his opinions, the whole philosophy and method of his movement necessarily secured it. Besides, the fearful hardships of the service almost automatically secured the dropping of the preacher the moment he deviated seriously

from Wesley. Just as the intense discipline of the Society (the military word "Company" is better) of Jesus, and the self-devotion in readiness to follow to the ends of the earth its far-flung standard, welded its members in unique unity of thought and intention, so the religious order of Methodism—an order growing out of its doctrines—and the fearful sacrifices to which its preachers were called fused the whole body in a wonderful harmony of teaching. For this reason Wesley did not need to abuse his authority by throwing out men who could not agree with him even on Calvinism, on which Wesley felt deeply. I recall his formal denial that he had ever dismissed a Calvinistic preacher who would work in decent accord with the movement, though this hardly seems in harmony with his action in the 1776 Conference: "What can be done to stop its [Calvinism's] progress? 1. Let all our preachers carefully read our Tracts, and Mr. Fletcher's and Mr. Sellon's. 2. Let them preach Universal Redemption frequently and explicitly," [43] etc. But his minutes and his doctrinal sermons—and he was the greatest doctrinal preacher of his time—were published immediately in pamphlet or book

[43] *Minutes* 1776, 8vo, ed. 1862 (reprint), vol. i, pp. 127, 128.

form, were in the hands of all his preachers, by whom they were sold to the members, and were required to be sold, and kept his connection in a doctrinal unity perhaps not surpassed in history.

In 1769 the Conference (that is, Wesley) resolved:

> 1. To devote ourselves entirely to God, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, steadily aiming at one thing, to save our own souls, and them that hear us.
>
> 2. To preach the Old Methodist doctrines, and no other, contained in the Minutes of the Conferences.
>
> 3. To observe and enforce the whole Methodist discipline, laid down in the Minutes.[44]

One of the questions asked by Wesley in receiving preachers was: "Do you know the Methodist plan of doctrine and discipline?" And the direction was given: "Let him then read and carefully weigh what is contained therein [that is, the Large Minutes, where doctrines are given], and see if he can agree to it or not."

The "care of all the churches" that rested on the shoulders of Wesley meant also the care of the doctrinal soundness of his preachers, to

[44] *Minutes of Conference*, 1769, 8vo, ed. of 1862, vol. i, pp. 88–89.

secure which he made ample provision. If any preacher had set forth essentially another gospel than Wesley's, he would have been dismissed without the slightest hesitation. In fact, as to preaching, Wesley's concern for the scriptural truth went to the altogether unwarrantable length of earnestly imploring Lady Maxwell to throw up her commission as executrix of the will of Lady Glenorchy, who had provided funds for the building of several Calvinistic chapels![45] And from his reply to liberal Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, we can readily see that any important deviation of his preachers from historical Christianity would have been regarded with horror.

Wesley was no systematic theologian. He neither had the time, inclination, nor resources for profound and long-continued study in theology in the way, say of Calvin, Turretini, Watson, Hodge, Shedd, etc. But he had intense interest in theological truth, and defended it with noble persistency and earnestness. That truth was to him what we know as the ordinary evangelical theology of our fathers and—excepting decrees and a few minor points—of all the Protestant Churches, Presbyterian,

[45] Eayrs, *lib. cit.*, pp. 418, 419.

Baptist, Congregational, Low Church Episcopalian. As to the terms of membership in his societies, he was liberal; as to the definition of the church he was liberal; as to his all-embracing catholicity of spirit in looking for the salvation of all earnest people, heathen and Christian, who lived according to their light, he was liberal; as to a wide mental outlook and communion with earnest, enlightened spirits of all races, times, and creeds, he was liberal. But as to utter devotion to the central truths of the gospel as historically witnessed by the evangelical Protestant churches, no one could be more conservative. He did not write this line, but he might have written it:

> "On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
> All other ground is sinking sand."

III

WESLEY AS CHURCHMAN

THE relation of John Wesley and early Methodism to the Church of England is one of the disputed questions of church history. It has practical interest as well on account of the repeated attempts to induce the Methodists to join the Church of England or Protestant Episcopal Church on the ground of the alleged loyalty of Wesley to the church, and especially on account of his alleged High Church notions. From documents printed by Urlin some think that the common notion that Wesley maintained strictly evangelical opinions after 1738 must be revised. It is therefore of interest to inquire what was Wesley's real attitude toward the Established Church of his country.

It is acknowledged on all hands that previous to his conversion in 1738 Wesley was an ardent High Churchman. He recommended confession, he practiced weekly communion, he observed all the festivals and the fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, he mixed the sacramental

wine with water, and in other respects anticipated the churchly enthusiasm of the Oxford reformers of 1833. Now, it would be indeed remarkable if no trace of these sentiments appeared after the spiritual revolution of 1738. No doubt there are traces of High Church ideas after this. Wesley always maintained a theory as to the Lord's Supper which seems at first blush at no great distance from High Anglicanism. In 1788 he republished a sermon ~~be~~ he had written in Oxford in 1733, and he says in the preface: "I have added very little, but retrenched much, as I then used more words than I do now. But I thank God that I have not seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered." He here calls the sacrament the "Christian sacrifice," but he does not explain in what sense he uses these words. He says: "As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ." He who neglects the Supper shows that he "either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory." But how the Supper does this is not

explained. The "first Christians for several centuries," says Wesley, "received it almost every day; four times a week always, and every saints' day beside. Those who joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament." He quotes the ancient canon: "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated as bringing confusion into the Church of God." The "design of the sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ." God has given us "certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which of his infinite mercy he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven." But here again just how the Supper does this Wesley is silent. He speaks later of the one who comes and receives no benefit. The reason of that, he says, is that he is "not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands and receive all the promises of

God, or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God." From this it appears that the spiritual condition and response of the believer is the chief thing. If the soul is in the right condition, then the sacrament is a help. In this sermon Wesley strongly advocates "constant" communion, by which he means receiving the communion every time one worships in a church where it is given, never leaving the service without receiving where the Supper is offered. There is nothing especially High Church in this sermon. Any pious Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, who deeply appreciates the Eucharist, might have written it.[1]

In 1757 Wesley printed (4th ed.) extracts from a Eucharistical volume by Dr. Brevint as a preface to some sacramental hymns by himself, and especially by his brother Charles, though the authorship of each is not distinguished by name. This volume is quoted at length by High Church writers as evidence of Wesley's sacramentarianism. I have read all the parts which look in this direction, and I have not found anything inconsistent with the historic doctrine of the English Church that the

[1] *Works*, London ed., 14 vols., vol. vii, pp. 147–157 (Sermon 101).

body and blood of Christ are partaken of in the sacrament in a spiritual manner. The Wesleys undoubtedly held to the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament, but that presence was spiritual and not corporeal. Brevint teaches that the sacrament is a sacrifice, but he is too devotionally impressive to be theologically clear. He writes in a mystical, rhetorical, massive way, but his book is for practical and devotional purposes, and we do not know what doctrinal implications are behind either his or Charles Wesley's fervid impressionist representations. Notice the strong words of Brevint: "To men the Holy Communion is a sacred table where God's minister is ordered to represent from God his Master the sacrifice of his dear Son, as still fresh and still powerful for their eternal salvation. And to God it is an altar whereon men mystically present to Him the same sacrifice as still bleeding and suing for mercy."[2]

And Charles Wesley:

> "'Tis done; the Lord sets to his seal;
> The prayer is heard, the grace is given;
> With joy unspeakable we feel
> The Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

[2] *The Eucharistical Manuals of John Wesley and Charles Wesley*, reprinted, etc., ed. with Introduction by W. E. Dutton, London, 1871, p. 70.

The altar flames with sacred blood,
And all the temple flames with God!" [3]

Speaking of the early Christians:

"From house to house they broke the bread
Impregnated with the life divine,
And drank the Spirit of their Head
Transmitted in the sacred wine." [4]

Again:

" 'Take and eat,' the Saviour saith,
'This my sacred body is!'
Him we take and eat by faith,
Feed upon that flesh of his;
All the benefits receive
Which his passion did procure;
Pardoned by his grace we live,
Grace which makes salvation sure." [5]

"Sure instrument of present grace
Thy sacrament we find;
Yet higher blessings it displays,
And raptures still behind." [6]

"Now on the sacred table laid,
Thy flesh becomes our food,
Thy life is to our souls conveyed
In sacramental blood." [7]

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[3] *The Eucharistical Manuals of John Wesley and Charles Wesley*, reprinted, etc., p. 169. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 248.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 184. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 176. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

No one could write these lines without holding a high doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace. Its preciousness to both the brothers was exceeding great. But I hardly think it fair to press these poetic realisms into theological molds, and on the strength of the result claim that Wesley departed from the ordinary teaching of the Church of England. That teaching is that the Supper was a memorial of Christ's death, in which Christ was spiritually present whether in the service or the elements, which elements became sacramentally the body and blood, partaking of which in faith our souls and bodies are built up into life eternal.

As to baptism, Wesley continued to hold baptismal regeneration. He says:

> It is certain that our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again, and it is allowed that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition.[8] "The first benefit we receive by baptism is the washing away of the guilt of original sin, by the application of the merit of Christ's death. . . . Baptism is the ordinary instrument of our justification. . . . In the rubric at the end of the office of baptism our Church declares: 'It is certain by God's Word that children who are baptized dying before they commit actual sin are saved.' By baptism we are ad-

[8] *Works*, vol. vi, p. 74 (Sermon 45).

mitted into the Church and consequently made members of Christ, its Head. . . . By it we who are by nature children of wrath are made children of God. . . . By water as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again. . . . Not by the outward washing, but by the inward grace added thereto. . . . Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe and obey the gospel."[9] Who denies that you were then [in baptism] made children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom of heaven?"[10]

But that will not save you now. He calls baptism the circumcision of Christ, "as St. Paul emphatically terms baptism" (though Saint Paul does not term it that, but let that pass), but says that past baptism will not at all help you now except you are living as Christians should.[11] "I baptized a gentlewoman at the Foundery, and the peace she immediately found was a fresh proof that the outward sign, duly received, is always accompanied with the inward grace."[12]

As to adults, Wesley held that baptism had

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[9] *Works*, vol. x, pp. 190–192, "Treatise on Baptism," really by his father, but adopted as his own and published without name in *Works* (extracted 1756).

[10] *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 222 (Sermon 18).

[11] *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 221. The same in vol. viii, p. 48.

[12] *Journal*, February 5, 1760, new Standard ed., vol. iv, p. 365.

no efficacy in itself. "Whatever be the case with infants, it is sure of all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again."[13] He distinguished between the sign (the water) and the inner grace, and claimed that baptism was not necessarily the new birth,[14] and with adults never except accompanied by penitence and faith. In his note on Acts 22. 16, speaking of adults, he says: "Baptism administered to real penitents is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily, in the primitive Church, bestow this on any except through this means." But this opinion as to infant baptismal regeneration he held privately, and never tried to enforce it on his preachers, many of whom rejected it; and when he prepared his Sunday Service, in 1784, he eliminated all possible traces of the doctrine in this revision of the Thirty-nine Articles, a fact which shows that his final conclusion was not to insist on the doctrine in any sense.

Twenty-five Articles of the Methodist Episcopal Church as sent over by Wesley (1784). Art. 17:	Thirty-nine Articles of Church of England (1563). Art. 27:

[13] *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p. 74 (Sermon 45).

[14] *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p 73.

"Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church."

"Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not Christians, but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promise of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

(The whole article refers to baptism in itself, whether given to infants or adults.)

R. Denny Urlin, the High Church biographer of Wesley, and an enthusiastic student and lover of him, came into possession of certain papers which he published for the first time in

1870.[15] Among them there was a fragment by Wesley which Urlin dates about 1741, and which read as follows:

I believe [myself] it a duty to observe, so far as I can [without breaking communion with my own Church].[16]

1. To baptize by immersion.

2. To use water, Oblation of Elements, Invocation, Alms, or Prothesis,[17] in the Eucharist.

3. To pray for the faithful departed.

4. To pray standing on Sunday in Pentecost.

5. To observe Saturday and Sunday Pentecost as festival.

I think it prudent [our own Church not considered]—

1. To observe the Stations.[18]

2. Lent, especially the Holy Week.

3. To turn to the East at the Creed.

That is certainly a pretty formidable list of ritualistic observances. Urlin argues that this manuscript belongs to 1741. I think, on the contrary, from internal evidence, there being no decisive external evidence, that this bit of High

[15] *Wesley's Place in Church History* (London, 1870, new ed.), much changed and enlarged under title of *The Churchman's Life of John Wesley* (London, SPCK., 1886), pp. 66, 67.

[16] The words in brackets appear to have a line drawn through them with a pen.

[17] A prothesis was a little table or stand (same as credence table) used to hold elements, etc., before consecration.

[18] The Stations were fasts on Wednesday and Friday as observed in ancient church and Greek Church to-day.

Church literature antedates 1738, and belongs either to Wesley's Oxford or Georgia life. The observances mentioned in the list are thoroughly consonant with Wesley's notions and manner of life at that time, but after he began his evangelistic career they are out of tune with all his teaching; and, besides, it was physically impossible to observe them. The fact that Wesley never published these notes shows that he considered them not to represent his mature convictions, and the fact that he did not destroy them shows that he considered them important in giving a view of his spiritual history.

A strong indirect evidence of the persistent influence of Wesley's early ritualistic enthusiasm, though turned into another channel, is the earnest, almost stern, ascetic, ethical and religious precepts which were embodied in his Rules for Preachers, in his Rules for the Societies, and in his Rules for the Bands. I do not know of anyone who has called attention to this.

Let us now seek an actual history of Wesley's attitude toward the Church of England. His association with the Moravians had profoundly affected him, and their exposition of the way of salvation convinced him that salvation may be

instantaneous, that it is to be sought by faith. This led to that remarkable experience in Aldersgate Street in May, 1738, which Wesley himself called his conversion, a word which he afterward retracted as too strong. A few days afterward he went so far as to declare that previous to that experience he had never been a Christian at all, but later reflection led him to correct this and to say that he had had indeed the faith of a servant; that is, he had been all along a Christian, but that he served God in a servile way, without the gladness and triumph that comes from the full trust of a child. At any rate, in that experience Methodism was born. On the strength of that he went forth calling sinners to immediate repentance and salvation. Miss Julia Wedgwood, in her thoughtful study, *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1870), has correctly judged the immense importance of that experience. She says (p. 157) that it meant that the emphasis of Wesley (and so of modern Protestantism) was to be changed from baptism to conversion. That experience cut up Wesley's High Church theology by the roots—I mean in its essential features. No longer was the stress to be laid

upon the sacraments, upon observances and rites as means of salvation, but solely upon faith; and the chief means of conversion was preaching, not baptism nor confirmation nor catechizing nor worship. From this all the important features of the Methodist revival followed as a matter of course: (1) the organization of the converted into societies and classes, where these who had been made kings and priests unto God testified of their experience in divine things; (2) the employment of lay preachers, who were sent forth everywhere preaching the gospel, and bringing multitudes to Christ; (3) extemporaneous prayer in the divine service. It followed also that sacramentarian theology disappeared as the central principle of the movement and the theology of Christian experience took its place. Anyone with the least discernment could see that such a movement as that foreboded ill to the Established Church, that it had within it the seeds of separation. As early as October, 1739, Wesley's brother Samuel, who bitterly lamented the new departures, wrote as follows to his mother:

> It was with exceeding concern and grief that I heard you had countenanced a spreading delusion, so far as to

be one of Jack's congregation. It is not enough that I am bereft of both my brothers, but must my mother follow too? I earnestly beseech the Almighty to preserve you from joining a schism at the close of your life, as you were unfortunately engaged in one at the beginning of it.[19] It will cost you many a protest, should you retain your integrity, as I hope to God you will. They boast of you already as a disciple. They design separation. They are already forbidden all the pulpits in London, and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood, it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough. They leave all the liturgy in the fields; and though Mr. Whitefield expresses his value for it, he never once read it to his tatterdemalions on a common. Their societies are sufficient to dissolve all other societies but their own. Will any man of common sense or spirit suffer any domestic to be in a band, engaged to relate to five or to ten people everything, without reserve that concerns the person's conscience, how much soever it may concern the family? Ought any married persons to be there unless husband and wife be there together? This is literally putting asunder what God has joined together.

As I told Jack, I am not afraid the Church should excommunicate him (discipline is at too low an ebb) but, that he should excommunicate the Church. It is pretty near it. Holiness and good works are not so much as

[19] Samuel Wesley refers to the fact that in her childhood home his mother was a Nonconformist, her father, Dr. Annesley, being one of the ejected ministers. But as she deliberately conformed to the church at the early age of thirteen, this reminder of her infantile Puritanism was very ungracious, if not insulting.

conditions of our acceptance with God. Love feasts are introduced, and extemporary prayers, and expositions of Scripture, which last are enough to bring in all confusion; nor is it likely they will want any miracles to support them. He only who ruleth the madness of the people can stop them from being a formed sect. Ecclesiastical censures have lost their terrors; thank fanaticism on the one hand, and atheism on the other. To talk of persecution from thence is mere insult. It is—

> "To call the bishop, Grey-beard Goff,
> And make his power as mere a scoff,
> As Dagon, when his hands were off." [20]

It is evident from this remarkable letter, that Samuel Wesley, had he lived, would have been the determined enemy of his brother's work, for with farsighted prescience he saw that it would issue in a permanent separation from the church. Whether Wesley himself saw this trend we cannot say. At any rate, he was too near the movement and too absorbed in his evangelism to judge the issues of it with the sagacity of his older brother. But if he saw that trend, he never lost any sleep over it, conscientiously attached, though he was, to the church.

At the first Conference, in 1744, it was

[20] Priestley's *Letters*, p. 108; Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 286, 287.

resolved to defend the doctrine of the Church of England, both by their preaching and living; to obey the bishops in all things indifferent, and to observe the canons of the church as far as they could with a safe conscience; and finally, to exert themselves to the utmost not to entail a schism in the church, by their hearers forming themselves into a distinct sect, though they agreed that they must not neglect the present opportunity of saving souls, for fear of consequences which might possibly or probably happen after they were dead.[21] Thus at the very first Conference Wesley and his preachers laid down a program to which they continuously adhered as long as the founder lived, namely, a qualified adherence to the church, but at the sacrifice of no principle, at the expense of no limitation on the movement, and with no fear of far-off consequences.[22]

There is no doubt that Wesley had great respect for Episcopal Church government, and that he firmly believed that no unordained man should administer the sacraments. But how early his High Church theories were superseded, or were in the process of being superseded, is

[21] Tyerman, vol. i, p. 444.

[22] The same principles appear in *Works*, vol. i, pp. 486–489.

afforded by his Minute in the second Conference, 1745, which is certainly ingenious and interesting, whatever else may be said for it:

Q. 1. Can he be a spiritual governor of the Church who is not a believer or member of it?

A. It seems not; though he may be a governor in outward things by a power delivered from the king.[23]

Q. 2. What are properly the laws of the Church of England?

A. The Rubrics; and to those we submit as the ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

Q. 3. Is not the will of our governors a law?

A. No; not of any governor, temporal or spiritual. Therefore if any bishop wills that I should not preach the Gospel, his will is no law to me.[24]

Q. 4. But what if he produce a law against your preaching?

A. I am to obey God rather than man.

Q. 5. Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent [that is, Congregational] Church government most agreeable to reason?

A. The plain origin of Church government seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the Gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the Gospel. They then desire him to watch over

[23] In this Wesley releases himself from obedience to all unconverted bishops, the very negative of High Churchism.

[24] Compare with this John Henry Newman's respect for his bishop in his Tractarian period, as that was of the essence of Catholicism.

them, to build them up in faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness. Here, then, is an independent congregation subject to no pastor but their own, neither liable to be controlled in things spiritual by any other man or body of men whatsoever. But soon after, some from other parts, who are occasionally present while he speaks in the name of Him that sent him, beseech him to come over and help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God, he consents, yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their advice appointed one or more who have gifts of grace to watch over the flock till his return. If it pleases God to raise another flock in the new place, before he leaves them he does the same thing, appointing one whom God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by his Word, he appoints one in his absence to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the abilities which God giveth. These are deacons or servants of the Church, and look on the first pastor as their common father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls. These congregations are not absolutely independent, they depend on one pastor, though not on each other. As these congregations increase, and as their deacons grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate deacons or helpers, in respect to whom they may be called presbyters or

elders, as their father in the Lord may be called the bishop or overseer of them all.

Q. 6. Is mutual consent absolutely necessary between the pastor and his flock?

A. No question. I cannot guide any soul unless he consent to be guided by me. Neither can any soul force me to guide him if I consent not.

Q. 7. Does the ceasing of this consent on either side dissolve that relation?

A. It must, in the very nature of things. If a man no longer consents to be guided by me I am no longer his guide. I am free. If one will not guide me any longer I am free to seek one who will.[25]

This simple and unaffected exposition of primitive church polity after a modified Congregational-Episcopal pattern, a kind of unconscious response to his own history, and in which he virtually calls his preachers presbyters and himself bishop, is a remarkable production for an ardent son of the Church of England. It is certainly a rare document to come from a High Churchman. This exposition was not concealed among his papers, but published immediately in the authoritative Minutes of his Conference. And yet it is an illustration of one of those strange transitions in Wesley's thought, and of his holding apparently contradictory positions—

[25] *Minutes of Conferences*, vol. i, pp. 26, 27 (last London ed.)

a fact which has given so much trouble to both Methodists and Anglicans—that in December of that same year, 1745, he wrote to his brother-in-law, Westley Hall, who had urged him to renounce the Church of England, a letter in which he came out strongly for the apostolic authority of the threefold ministry. He says:

> We believe it would not be right for us to administer either baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission to do so from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the apostles. And yet we allow these bishops are the successors of those who were dependent on the bishop of Rome. . . . We believe there is and always was in every Christian Church, whether dependent on the bishop of Rome or not, an outward priesthood, ordained by Jesus Christ, and outward sacrifice afforded therein, by men authorized to act as ambassadors of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. . . . We believe that the threefold order of ministers, which you seem to mean by papal hierarchy and prelacy, is not only authorized by its apostolical institution, but also by the written Word.[26]

This is certainly explicit enough to satisfy any High Churchman. In the same letter he says he will follow the laws of the Church of England only as far as his conscience will permit. But

[26] *Works*, vol. ii, p. 4.

notice this: On the same page of his Journals, under date of January 20, 1746, Wesley writes:

> I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others!

In spite therefore of his bold words to Hall, it would seem, after all, that the declaration of his Conference of 1745 would stand. But at his next Conference he tried to come to a middle position. After calling a national church a "merely political institution," he says:

> Q. Are the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons plainly described in the New Testament?
> A. We think they are; and believe they generally obtained in the apostolic age.
> Q. But are you assured that God designed the same plan should obtain in all churches, throughout all ages?
> A. We are not assured of this, because we do not know that it is inserted in the Holy Writ.
> Q. If this plan were essential to a Christian Church, what must become of all the foreign reformed Churches?
> A. It would follow that they are no parts of the Church of Christ. A consequence full of shocking absurdity.

Q. In what age was the divine right of episcopacy first asserted in England?

A. About the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Till then all the bishops and clergy in England continually allowed and joined in the ministrations of those who were not episcopally ordained.

Q. Must there not be numberless accidental varieties in the government of various churches?

A. There must in the nature of things. For as God variously dispenses his gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the officers themselves and the offices in each ought to be varied from time to time.

Q. Why is it that there is no determinate plan of church government appointed in Scripture?

A. Without doubt, because the wisdom of God had regard to a necessary variety.

Q. Was there any thought of uniformity in the government of all churches, until the time of Constantine?

A. It is certain there was not, and would not have been then, had men consulted the word of God only.[27]

If therefore Wesley spoke as a High Churchman to Hall in December, 1745, he spoke as a Low Churchman in the summer of 1747. Tyerman says that ever after this the opinions of Wesley on ecclesiastical polity were substantially those of Dissenters, and although this is a fair induction. there are incongruous

[27] *Minutes*, ed. 1862 (reprint), vol. i, p. 36; Tyerman, vol. i, p. 509.

elements yet left in Wesley's Churchmanship.

Nearly ten years after this we find Wesley still firm in his broad views as to the church, and confirmed in them by Bishop Stillingfleet's *Eirenicon*. In a letter to a clergyman dated July 3, 1756, he says:

> I still believe the Episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical. I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture, I do not believe. This opinion which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think that he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor his apostles have ever prescribed any form of Church government, and that the plea of divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church. . . .
>
> As to heresy and schism, I cannot find one text in the Bible where they are taken in the modern sense. I remember no one Scripture wherein heresy signifies error in opinion, whether fundamental or not; nor any wherein schism signifies a separation from the Church, whether with cause or without.[28]

Speaking of Stillingfleet's *Eirenicon*, I might say that Wesley brings it in again over against Article 23 of the thirty-nine Articles of the

[28] *Works*, vol. xiii, p. 211; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 244.

Church of England, which says that no one shall preach or administer sacraments who has not received public authority by the proper officers (meaning bishops of the Church of England), which he was accused of violating. Wesley says: "They [the Wesleys and others] subscribed it [the twenty-third Article] in the simplicity of their hearts when they firmly believed none but episcopal ordination valid. But Bishop Stillingfleet has since fully convinced them this was an entire mistake."[29] Much later he says again: "Read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*, or any impartial history of the ancient Church, and I believe you will think as I do. I verily believe I have as good right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper. But I see abundance of reasons why I should not use that right unless I was turned out of the Church."[30] Later he saw reasons and used the right.

In 1761 Wesley, answering a Roman Catholic, claims a true succession for the Reformed churches, but it is a spiritual succession, and he says that the apostolical succession, on which the validity of the Roman Catholic bishop rests,

[29] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii, pp. 235, 236 (1761).

[30] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii, p. 147 (1780).

has no evidence. "I could never see it proved; and I am persuaded I never shall." [31] And far on in the evening of his life, he declared himself to the same intent. In a letter to his brother Charles, who had upbraided him severely for ordaining preachers for America, he says (1785):

> For these forty years I have been in doubt concerning the question, what obedience is due to
>
> "Heathenish priests, and mitered infidels?" [32]
>
> I have from time to time proposed my doubts to the most pious and sensible clergymen I knew. But they gave me no satisfaction. Rather they seemed to be puzzled as well as me. Obedience I always paid to the bishops in obedience to the laws of the land. But I cannot see that I am under any obligation to obey them further than those laws require. It is in obedience to those laws that I have never exercised in England the power which I believe God has given me. I firmly believe I am a Scriptural Επίσκοπος as much as any man in England, or in Europe, for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove.[33]

The question of separation of the Methodists from the Church of England was a question in

[31] *Journal*, February, 1761.

[32] This is a quotation from one of Charles Wesley's early poems in which he describes church clergymen. This sentiment Charles afterward withdrew as too strong.

[33] Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, pp. 729, 730 (New York ed.), vol. ii, pp. 394–396 (1st London ed.).

perpetual discussion in the Conferences from the first Conference almost to the close of Wesley's life. The very fact that Wesley allowed it to come up constantly, that it was always a mooted question, and that Wesley's solution of it was: For the present we remain in the Church; let the future take care of itself —thus referring its final solution to his successors—shows that his attachment to the Church of England, though hearty, rested on expediency, and not on divine obligation. I have read the decisions of all the Conferences on this question, and Wesley's voluminous correspondence, and I find the sum of it to be: Whether or no separation is lawful, it is not expedient. Sometimes he was more concerned for union, at other times he was less concerned. At one time he waves it aside as an external question of no consequence: "I dare not in conscience," he says, speaking of this, "spend my time and strength on externals. If, as my Lady [Huntingdon] says, all outward establishments are Babel, so is this establishment. Let it stand for me, I neither set it up, nor pull it down. But let you [he is writing to Charles] and I build up the City of God." [34]

[34] June 28, 1755, Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 206.

A most important document is the letter of Wesley to the Rev. Samuel Walker, a zealous clergyman in Truro, written after the Conference of 1755. In this he gives the reasons for separation urged in the debates. These reasons were: 1. Though the liturgy is excellent, it is "absurd and sinful to declare such an assent and consent to any merely human composition" as is required to it. 2. Though they did not object to the use of forms, they durst not confine themselves to them. 3. Because they considered the decretals of the Church as the "very dregs of popery," and "many of the canons as grossly wicked as absurd." The spirit which the canons breathe is throughout popish and anti-Christian. Nothing can be more diabolical than the *ipso-facto* excommunication so often denounced therein, while the whole method of executing these canons in our spiritual courts is too bad to be tolerated, not in a Christian, but in a Mohammedan or pagan nation. 4. Because they feared that many of the Church of England ministers neither lived the gospel, taught it, nor knew it, and because they doubted "whether it was lawful to attend the ministrations of those whom God had not sent to minister." 5. Be-

cause the doctrines preached by these clergymen were "not only wrong, but fundamentally so, and subversive of the whole Gospel." Then Wesley says: "I will freely acknowledge that I cannot answer the arguments given to my own satisfaction; so that my conclusion, which I cannot yet give up, that it is lawful to continue in the Church, stands almost without any premises that are able to bear its weight." Certainly, that is a strange confession for a High Churchman. He then says, "The original doctrines of the Church of England are sound, and I know her worship is in the main pure and Scriptural; but if the essence of the Church of England, considered as such, consists in her orders and laws, many of which I myself can say nothing for, and not in her worship and doctrines, those who separate from her have a far stronger plea than I was ever sensible of." [35] I could give many other quotations from Wesley equally significant.

After this Wesley came under strong pressure from Charles, from Whitefield, Lady Huntingdon, and from the clergy friendly to the Methodists, to take a more decided stand to keep

[35] *Methodist Magazine*, 1779, p. 371; Tyerman, vol. ii, pp. 207, 208.

his people into closer touch with the church, all of which, of course, went along with his own education, preferences, etc. In 1758 he issued a pamphlet, *Reasons Against Separation from the Church of England*, 2d ed., 1760, reprinted in facsimile by the Historical Club (New York) of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1875, in which he gives twelve reasons for Methodists not becoming a separate church or denomination. These are: 1. It would contradict our repeated declarations. 2. It would give occasion of offense to the enemies of God. 3. It would prejudice against us pious folk who now receive benefit from our preaching. 4. It would hinder multitudes who do not love God from hearing us. 5. It would cause hundreds, if not thousands, of our people to separate from us. 6. It would cause much strife, first between those who left the church and those who did not, and second between those who left us and those who did not, whereas we are now in peace. 7. It would cause public and private controversy, and thus take our time from preaching vital religion. 8. We should have to form a plan for a new church, and for that we have neither time nor competence. 9. Even distant thoughts of leaving the church has caused some

to conceive and express contempt of the clergy. 10. History shows that reformers—instance Arndt and Robert Bolton—have done much more good when they remained in their churches than when they separated. 11. This is shown in England in our own memory. Those who left the church and formed new bodies have not prospered, and have not been more holy or useful than before. 12. Such separation would contradict the very end for which God has raised us up. That end is to quicken our brethren of the Church of England, our first message to the lost sheep of that church.

He then gives some more general reasons for keeping on in his usual course. He looks upon himself not as the author of a sect or party, but as a "messenger of God to those who are Chris tians in name, but heathens in heart and life," to call them back to real genuine Christianity. We are debtors to all of "whatsoever opinion or denomination" to "please all for their good to edification." The Methodists are raised up to be witnesses to "every part" of that Christianity which we preach. He looks upon England as the special land, and the Church of England as the special church, to which, as being born and brought up in, he owes his chief concern and

work. When he thinks of that "complicated wickedness which covers them as a flood" he feels he must "spend and be spent for them." We must particularly regard the clergy and make it a sacred rule to all our preachers—"No contempt, no bitterness to the clergy." Also, while we do not condemn attending Dissenting meeting for those who have been accustomed to it, we think it expedient for our preachers who have not been accustomed to it not to do this, because, first, that is actually separating; and second, because Dissenting meeting is at the same hour as the church. If anyone says we are fed with chaff at the church, we reply, The prayers and Supper are not chaff, and there will certainly be some truth in the sermon. Then in the Meeting (Nonconformist worship) the preachers are either New Light men "denying the Lord that bought them and overturning his Gospel from the very foundations," or they are predestinarians. Experience has shown that our brethren who have imbibed this doctrine have become "fond of opinions and strife and words, and despise self-denial and the daily cross." Another reason is so interesting that I quote the whole paragraph:

Nor is it expedient for any Methodist preacher to imitate the Dissenters in their manner of praying; either, in his tone—all particular tones both in prayer and preaching should be avoided with the utmost care; nor in his language—all his words should be plain and simple, such as the lowest of his hearers both use and understand. Or in the length of his prayer, which should not usually exceed four or five minutes, either before or after sermon. One might add, neither should we sing, like them, in a slow, drawling manner: we sing swift, both because it saves time and because it tends to awaken and enliven the soul.

We should not speak contemptuously of the church, but treat her blemishes with "solemn sorrow before God." Every Methodist preacher who has no scruple should attend the church service as often as he can. Our preachers should also read *Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, *Serious Thoughts Concerning Perseverance*, and *Predestination Calmly Considered*. They will then be able to answer objections.

I wonder if the Nonconformist churches in Wesley's time had been Arminian and evangelical, would he have felt this dread of Methodists becoming an independent church. To him the Church of England was the only middle ground that England then offered between

Calvinism and Unitarianism. And as he detested both, he was anxious to keep the Methodists either in his own societies or close to the Church of England.

But what, historically, was the relation between the Methodists and the church? Wesley's arguments here really move in a vacuum. The majority of the people of England had been baptized in infancy in the Church of England. The Dissenters had been kept down and when possible persecuted by the church. Even at this time they had but few rights compared with what they have to-day. But as supported by the state, and with so many Catholic elements, the clergy of the church had lapsed from devotion, many into carelessness, some into fast living, like horse-racing, hunting, etc., some into drink and immorality. The people of England were drifting into unbelief, indifference, and many into vice. It was a sodden and rotten England, as can be seen by the persecutions from mobs suffered by the Methodists, by the pictures of Hogarth, or the novels of Fielding. In fact, if you want to know the kind of morality there was in England when Wesley came out, and the kind of clergy he had to deal with, read that wonderfully clever and brilliant

story, almost Shakespearean in its knowledge of soul and life, Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Now Wesley and Whitefield, ministers of that church, and their assistants went out to call the people to repentance. They were shut out from the churches and had to take to the fields and market places. They had fruits. Wesley's converts were gathered into classes, with their own services, their own hymns, their own religious organization. They had really no more to do with the Established Church than with the Baptist Church, except that Wesley held his services not in church hours, and exhorted his people to go to the church at those hours, and to take communion there. Some did and some did not. Those who did not were not disciplined. The church itself took no cognizance of the Methodist societies. She did not dovetail them into her organization. Some of her clergy were sympathetic to the movement, and helped it all they could. Others were opposed to it, and others still persecuted it. The Methodists were legally and formally no more a part of the Episcopal Church of England than they were of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the most of them were not even morally and spiritually a part. So that a good

deal of Wesley's talk about separation had no bearing on facts. What bearing it had was simply this: I am determined while I live not to encourage my people to go to the non-Episcopal Churches for worship and sacraments, though not strictly forbidding them and allowing those who are accustomed to go, and I am determined not to organize the Methodists into a regular Nonconformist Church.

A similar line of thought comes out in Sermon 104, "On Attending the Church Service." It is to refute those who allege the evil living of Episcopal clergymen as an excuse for not attending worship in the Established Church. Though the sermon has no date, internal evidence shows it was written in his old age ("near fifty years ago a great and good man, Dr. Potter, then archbishop of Canterbury, gave me an advice," etc.). It is one of the many writings of Wesley which show how diligently he studied church history. He gives a sketch of the history of the church, tells how both Jewish priests and Christian ministers and priests degenerated, that pious people then felt that they could not attend the ministrations of these because they conceived such priests could be the vehicle of no divine blessing.

Wesley here speaks with frankness of the moral (rather immoral) condition of the ministers of his own church. But in spite of this, did the Jewish prophets urge the Jews not to attend the regular services? Not at all. Did Christ warn them against going to temple or synagogue? No, just the contrary. Later, Christians did separate for this reason from church worship. But the consequence was the church became more corrupt still. Well, did not Luther and Calvin separate? No, they were driven out. Later still some went out from the Church of England, but "they were not a jot better than those they separated from." It is said that the ministry of evil men cannot convey the grace of God, but this is not so. (1) If it were, it would mean "all the children of Israel went to hell for eleven or twelve hundred years together." (2) It would mean also that most Christians had perished, for the church's ministers have generally been corrupt in all ages. These two suppositions are impossible, for they imply that God had forgotten to be gracious. (3) Christ commanded the people to hear the religious teachers of his day (Matt. 23). (4) The efficacy of God's ordinances is derived not from the ministers who administer, but from Him

who ordains them. (5) Experience shows that people who worship in national churches, where "it is great odds whether a holy minister be stationed there," do really receive spiritual blessings, find that the "word of the Lord is not bound, and that the sacraments are not dry breasts." (6) Acting on the belief here refuted would bring fearful confusion, strife, jealousies, tumults, which might proceed from evil words to evil deeds and "rivers of blood be shed" to the scandal of the heathen. So, argues Wesley, our "original rule" was a good one, namely, "that every member of our society should attend the church and sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of any other denomination."[36]

It is not necessary to comment on this sermon. No one now would argue that the benefit we receive from worship or sacrament depends upon the worthiness of the leader. Everyone knows that that benefit depends upon the faith, love and spiritual faculties of the participant, and upon the truth he there receives. But if the Episcopal ministers were really as corrupt as Wesley presupposes, it was a fearful commentary on that church, and might well

[36] *Works*, vol. vii, pp. 174–185.

lead to the deeper question: Can a church be a Christian church at all whose official representatives are so unchristian? And if it is not a Christian church, then why not go into one that is, or form one that is? But here again, so far as the pertinency of his argument went and the consistency of that argument with his own life, Wesley was beating the air. He was out of touch with reality. He had himself in effect separated from the church. He had from the beginning formally appointed men to the work of preaching the gospel, and sent them into parishes of the Church of England to preach, and to gather people into societies, entirely separate from the church. This was clearly contrary to the rules of the Church of England and of every other church. The same thing done to-day would not be tolerated by any church in the world. Walker of Truro, Wesley's friend, saw this. He says: "Lay preachers, being contrary to the constitution of the Church of England, are, as far as that point goes, a separation from it." Thomas Adam, rector of Wintringham, also a friend of the Wesleys, is equally explicit as to the fatal breach between Methodism and the church. Writing in 1756, he says, in a letter which I shall quote more

fully, that lay preaching is a "manifest irregularity, and would not be endured in any Christian society." Wesley over and over again laid down this platform: I cannot give up lay preaching, organization of societies, extempore prayer. These he considered of more importance than church order. At the same time he would not allow these preachers to administer the sacraments, and in a letter of 1756 he gives the reason. He says that there is absolute necessity for lay preaching, for otherwise thousands of souls would perish everlastingly, but there is not absolute necessity for lay administering, for not one soul will perish for want of it—a characteristic remark of Wesley, and one which shows the immense drift from his sacramentarianism of 1733 to his evangelicalism of 1756.

Another line of evidence of very great interest is the opinion of Wesley's contemporaries. How did they look upon his relation to the Church of England? Was he to their eyes the faithful High Churchman whom some modern Episcopalians have set before us? I have already quoted the letter of Samuel Wesley to his mother, written at the very beginning of the movement, 1739, in which he urges his mother

to have nothing to do with a work which is already schismatic and will inevitably grow more and more so.

After Methodism had been well established, in 1755, a clerical friend of Wesley, the Rev. Mr. Baddiley, wrote him beseeching him not to allow the Methodists to become Dissenters—a contingency Baddiley profoundly feared.

> Be not, dear sir, estranged in your affection, nor straitened in your bowels of love to the mother that bare you, and still continues, notwithstanding small irregularities in you, to dandle you on her knees. O labor, watch, and pray, with all your might, that no such breach be made. Wherefore should the pickthank heathen have cause to say, "Where is now their God?" I query much, if, upon dissenting from the Established Church, the divisions and subdivisions of the Methodists among themselves would not exceed those of the Anabaptists in Germany.[37]

Baddiley's fears were shared by Whitefield. In the same year this great preacher wrote to Lady Huntingdon:

> Oh, how hath my pleasure been annoyed at Leeds [where the Conference had just been held in which a long debate had been allowed by Wesley on the question of total separation from the Church, on ordination, etc., the ablest and most consecrated of the preachers being for separation, their arguments being, as Wesley himself

[37] *Methodist Magazine*, 1779, p. 320; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 205.

admitted, unanswerable]. I rejoiced there with trembling, for unknown to me, they had almost finished a large house in order to form a separate congregation. If this scheme succeeds, an awful separation, I fear, will take place among the societies. I have written to Mr. Wesley, and I have done all I could to prevent it. Oh this self-love, this self-will! It is the devil of devils.[38]

Thomas Adam, rector of Wintringham, near Malton, Yorkshire, seemed to share the views of Samuel Wesley as to the schismatic trend of Methodism. In a letter to Wesley, October 10, 1755, he says:

Your present embarrassments are very great [over the struggle for independence on the part of many of the people and preachers], and should be a warning to all how they venture upon a revolt from the authority and standing rules of the Church to which they belong. I fear, sir, that your saying you do not appoint, but only approve of the lay preachers, from a persuasion of their call and fitness, savors of disingenuity. Where is the difference? Under whose sanction do they act? Would they think their call a sufficient warrant for commencing preaching without your approbation, tacit or express? And what is their preaching upon this call but a manifest breach upon the order of the Church, and an inlet to confusion? Upon the whole, therefore, I submit to your serious consideration whether the separation is not wide enough already, particularly in the instance of unordained persons preaching and gathering societies to themselves,

[38] Whitefield, *Works*, vol. ii, p. 144; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 209.

wherever they can, and whether all the Methodists might not serve the interests of Christ better by returning to a closer union with the Church, or repairing the breach they have made, than by making it still wider, and separating, what they think, the Gospel leaven from the lump.[39]

This was a strong appeal, and Wesley could not from the standpoint of the churchman well answer it. In his reply he places his work on the high ground of extraordinary necessity. "That I have not gone too far yet I know, but whether I have gone far enough I am extremely doubtful. I see those running whom God has not sent; destroying their own souls, and those that hear them. Unless I warn in all ways I can these perishing souls of their danger, am I clear of the blood of these men? Soul-damning clergymen lay me under more difficulties than soul-saving laymen."[40]

The breach which Adam saw Methodism made in the church, and which he deprecated in his letter to Wesley in 1755, he still further defines in his letter to his friend Samuel Walker the next year. Walker had written his fears concerning Methodism to Adam. The answer

[39] *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1779, p. 373; Tyerman, vol. ii, pp. 239, 240.

[40] *Ibid.*, 1779, p. 376; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 211.

of Adam is one of the most straightforward judgments of Wesley's relation to the church which that time has handed down to us. This clear-headed clergyman, a friend to the Wesleys and yet loyal to the church, expresses the whole situation in words so significant that I give his brief letter in full.

September 21, 1756.

Dear Sir: Methodism, as to its external form, is such a deviation from the rule and constitution of the Church of England that all attempts to render it consistent must be in vain. Lay preaching is a manifest irregularity and would not be endorsed in any Christian society. To salve this sore, you say, *Let some of their lay preachers be ordained.* But suppose they were, to what end would they be ordained? That they might still go on to preach in fields, or private houses, and hold separate meetings? This would be as great a breach upon the order of the Church as ever, and perhaps attended with greater inconveniences than their present practice. J. Wesley will not, cannot give up the point of lay preaching; it will be giving up all, he must cry, "*Peccavi*" ("I have sinned") and his heart will hold him a tug before it comes to that. Upon the whole, my judgment is that they have embarrassed themselves past recovery; and must either go on in their present form or separate totally and openly. The latter, many think, would be more ingenuous than an underhand separation. I think you must ev'n let the Methodists alone. I do not see what help you can afford them, consistently with their principles and your own.

"Every plant," etc., should make us tremble on one side and the other.

I am, reverend and dear sir,
Your unworthy brother
THOMAS ADAM.[41]

As early as 1756 Charles Wesley saw that it needed resolute dealing to counteract the powerful force that was bearing the Methodists away from the church. He would cut off immediately all the preachers who were not in sympathy with the church, and have all the "sound ones" prepared for orders. Then he would have his brother "declare and avow in the strongest and most explicit manner his resolution to live and die in the communion of the Church of England, and take all proper pains to instruct and ground both his preachers and his flock in the same."[42] In this wish he was powerfully seconded by the Rev. Samuel Walker of Truro. Mr. Walker, a friend of the Wesleys, saw clearly that the Methodist movement was in itself a direct contradiction of Church of Englandism, and must inevitably lead, unless thwarted at once, to the establishment of another church. He tried his best in

[41] *Life of Samuel Walker of Truro*, p. 224; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 251.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 201; vol. ii, p. 245.

correspondence with both John and Charles to stave off this result. In a letter to Charles, dated August 16, 1756, Walker, after speaking of his great concern over this matter, says:

Lay preachers, being contrary to the constitution of the Church of England, are, as far as that point goes, a separation from it. It is quite another question whether lay preachers be agreeable to the appointment of the Spirit respecting the ministry. The matter is not whether lay preachers be needful, or what their calling may be. Be the one or the other as it will, the thing is plainly inconsistent with the discipline of the Church of England; and so in one essential point, setting up a church within her which cannot be of her. When, therefore, it is asked, Shall we separate from the Church of England? it should rather be asked, Shall we make the separation we have begun a separation in all forms? And if we do not think ourselves allowed to do this, shall we unite with her? We do not, unless lay preaching is laid aside.

Yourselves must judge the call and necessity of lay preachers and whether that, or anything beside, may justify a separation. Meantime there is a continual bar kept up between you and any regular clergyman, who cannot in conscience fall in with this measure. The most he can do is not to forbid them; he can not take them by the hand. And so there must be two disunited ministrations of the Word in the same place, by people who yet do call themselves of the Church of England.[43]

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[43] *Life of Samuel Walker*, p. 207; Tyerman, vol. ii, pp. 245, 246.

This almost pathetic protest against Methodism, as John Wesley was carrying it on, from one of the best and most devoted of the evangelical clergy is most instructive. It shows the embarrassment and confusion which these men felt toward a movement for whose spiritual side they had profound sympathy, but toward whose ecclesiastical side they had profound distrust. They did not and perhaps could not see that one side was direct counterpart to the other. They longed to remain on friendly terms with the movement, but how could they do that and yet remain true and consistent churchmen? Walker in his letter submitted a plan for the solution of the difficulty, which was, in short, this: Let the best of the lay preachers be ordained, to which he believed the archbishop would consent, and let the others settle down as class-leaders or lay deacons. To bring Methodism in harmony with the church, both lay preaching and the itinerancy must be utterly abolished. How our best calculations and opinions are sometimes overturned by events is amusingly illustrated in two prophecies in this letter of Walker's. "I remember, when it [Methodism] first began I said and thought that lay preaching would be the ruin of Methodism."

The lay preachers "will break out (and form a separate Church) at last, nor can anything less be expected at your brother's death, which is an event of no great distance, in all human appearances." Lay preaching was the salvation of Methodism, and Wesley lived thirty-five years after this.

Some of the preachers, to save themselves from persecution, had taken out licenses from the magistrates, an act which entered them as Dissenters, and which Wesley approved, but which made Charles Wesley furious. Grimshaw, rector of Haworth, a stanch friend to the Wesleys, wrote, in 1760, that from henceforth he could have nothing to do with the Methodists.

"The Methodists are no longer members of the Church of England. They are as real a body of Dissenters from her as the Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, or any body of Independents. . . . I hereby, therefore, assure you that I disclaim all further and future connection with the Methodists. I will quietly recede, without noise or tumult." The licensing of preachers and preaching houses "has been gradually growing ever since erecting preaching houses was first encouraged in the land; and if

you [he is writing to Charles] can stem the torrent, it will only be during your lives. As soon as you are dead all the preachers will then do as many have already done. Dissenters the Methodists will all shortly be; it cannot, I am fully satisfied, be prevented." [44]

It will be seen, therefore, that the deliberate judgment of Wesley's contemporaries, even of those who stood in friendly relations to him, was that his movement was direct violation of the constitution of the Church of England, that the Methodists were virtually Dissenters and would in time become openly such. But although these considerations were urged upon Wesley, he went onward in his gloriously inconsistent course, sending out new lay preachers every year, eventually ordaining some of them, and calmly leaving results in the hands of God.

Over against this whole tendency of Methodism under Wesley's hand, a tendency all the time away from the Church of England, not to speak of High Church theories, and over against the testimonies of Wesley and of his contemporaries, a striking sermon is brought forward. It is the famous Dathan and Abiram sermon of

[44] Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 191; Tyerman, vol. ii, p. 285.

1789, and is his last effort to prevent the administration of the sacraments by his unordained preachers. It was printed by Wesley in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1790, was not reprinted in Wesley's sermons after his death, but is included in the collected edition of Wesley's Works edited by Jackson, 1829–31, and in following editions. The text is: "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5. 4). Wesley says there is a difference between a priest, a prophet, and a preacher. At the time of Moses God appointed a whole tribe as a priestly tribe, Levi. They only could be priests. But prophets could be taken from any tribe. In the New Testament the prophets were usually called scribes. Our Lord built the church on the plan of the Jewish. There were apostles and evangelists to preach as missionaries, and pastors, preachers, and teachers to build up the faith of congregations already founded. The apostles and evangelists could preach, but they had no right to administer sacraments. This last belonged only to pastors or bishops. In the time of Constantine and after the office of evangelist (or apostle) and pastor (or bishop) became combined in one, in order that one man

might "engross the whole pay." But still there remained a difference, so that among Roman Catholics, Church of England, and Presbyterians it is considered that an evangelist or teacher is not necessarily the same as pastor, to whom alone belongs the administration of the sacraments. But you say, Methodists are different. Well, in a way they are. Two young men went out to "sow the word of God by the wayside." They advised all who joined their societies "not to leave their former congregation, but only their sins." "The Churchmen might go to Church still, the Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, might still retain their own opinions, and attend their own congregations." The only condition was "having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come." After that we accepted lay preachers: first, Maxwell, then Richards, then Westell—but only as preachers, not to administer sacraments, which is an entirely different office. In 1744 we had our first Conference. In that Conference the preachers did not dream they had a right to administer sacraments. The question, "In what light are we to consider ourselves?" was answered, "As *extraordinary messengers* raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to

jealousy." One of our first rules for a preacher was, To do *that part* of the work to which we appoint. What was that? "To administer sacraments? To exercise the priestly office?" "Such a design never entered our mind." If a preacher had taken such a step, he would have ceased by that fact to belong to us. We Methodists are a new thing in history. Other leaders formed a party or sect. We do not. Our members can belong to any church they wish, and we can do nothing to separate from their church those who have been members of the Church of England. How I stand is this: I hold the doctrines of the Church of England. [Wesley persuaded himself that the peculiar doctrines of Methodism were in harmony with the teaching of the church. Some of them were; others were not; most were out harmony with the spirit and general trend of that church.] I love her liturgy. [Wesley was sincere in this, though the liturgy was not used in most of his services.] I approve her plan of discipline. [He had formerly said—see above—that he did not like many of her canons and laws.] I vary from the church only when necessary. (1) I preach abroad [in the open]. (2) I pray extempore. (3) I unite the flock into little companies

to provoke one another to love and good works. (4) I meet the preachers, or the greater part, once a year, that we may assist each other and save our souls and those that hear us. (5) In those Conferences we fix the stations of the preachers for the ensuing year. But this is not separating from the church. I attend the service myself, when I have opportunity and advise our societies to do. I did allow the Methodists in Dublin to have services in church hours, but that was an exceptional case for special reasons. I beseech our preachers to remember that we were first called in the Church of England; do not leave it. "Be Church of England men still." But "Methodists themselves are of no particular sect or party; they receive those of all parties who endeavor to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with their God."[45]

This is the famous sermon of which our High Church brethren make so much. I do not blame them for rolling it under their tongue as a sweet morsel. It shows the conservatism of Wesley, as well as his radicalism, his conservatism in keeping his old love for the church of his youth and striving to keep his preachers and

[45] *Works*, vol. vii, p. 275–281 (serm. 115).

members in as close touch with it as he could, and his radicalism in ruthlessly departing from it wherever he thought necessary and actually having no more reference to it in the main part of his work than though it was in the moon. I find the following bit of history in Henry Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 339, New York ed.:

> I was with Mr. Wesley in London when he published that sermon. He encouraged me to be a man of *one book;* and he had repeatedly invited me to speak fully whatever objection I had to anything which he spoke or published. I thought that some things in that discourse were not to be found in *The Book;* and I resolved to tell him so the first opportunity. It soon occurred. I respectfully observed that I agreed with him that the Lord had always sent by whom he would send, instructions, reproof, and correction in righteousness to mankind, and that there was a real distinction between the prophetic and priestly office in the Old Testament, and the prophetic and pastoral office in the New, where no priesthood is mentioned but that of the Lord. But I could not think that what he had said concerning evangelists and pastors was agreeable to what we read there, viz., that the latter had a right to administer the sacraments which the former did not possess. I observed, "Sir, you know that the evangelists Timothy and Titus were ordered by the apostles to ordain bishops [that is, elders; Moore is using the Authorized Version of course; what they were really asked to do was to appoint elders] in every place; and they

surely could not impart to them an authority which they did not themselves possess." He looked earnestly at me for some time, but not with displeasure. He made no reply, and soon introduced another subject. I said no more. The man of *one book* would not dispute against it. I believe, he saw (that) his love to the Church from which he never deviated unnecessarily, had in this instance, led him a little too far.

I should think it had. Wesley's distinction between apostles or evangelists and pastors or bishops as to the administration of the sacraments in New Testament times was completely astray. There was no such distinction. And his carrying back the ordained Christian ministry to the Aaronic or Old Testament priesthood was the most barefaced fiction (of course not intentionally on his part), resting on no historical or theological grounds whatever, and was, in fact, inconsistent with all of his own higher and better ideas and teachings. No wonder that Moore told him his sermon was against the New Testament, and he had the nobleness and candor not to defend it. He never reprinted the sermon. Of course, Wesley was true in saying that it has been a matter of order in all churches Catholic and Protestant for unordained men not to administer the sacraments; and if he had been content to place

the matter on the simple platform of fact and of expediency, it would have been sufficient for his purpose. But to go further led him open to reply from those who saw how things were in the New Testament. And from the standpoint of our present-day knowledge of the New Testament and of early Christian history, that reply could be made far more convincing and extensive than Moore made it.

From a study of all the facts, it is readily seen that it is impossible to form a consistent picture of Wesley's churchmanship. It is crossed through and through with contradictions. His feelings, early training, all his associations, his prejudices, some of his principles, led him to warm regard for the church of his father and mother. The whole drift of his life after 1738 and all the crucial steps of his movement led him in effect to radical separation from it, accompanied at times with stern denunciation of it, and a formal repudiation of all its laws except the rubrics in its ritual, which also were thrown to the winds in his ordinations. These last are so well known that they are not gone into here.

APPENDIX I

The Erasmus-Wesley Ordination Story

In 1763 Bishop Erasmus, of Crete, of the Greek Church, visited England, and at the request of Wesley ordained as presbyter John Jones, an able and learned preacher of Wesley's band. It seems also that Samson Staniforth and Thomas Bryant were also ordained by Erasmus, but whether at Wesley's request, we do not know. Eight years after (1771) Augustus Toplady published a Letter to Wesley in which he made the insinuation in the way of a question that Wesley *requested* Erasmus to ordain him (Wesley) a bishop. But Toplady also implies that Erasmus refused. Toplady's words are:

> "Did you not strongly press this supposed Greek bishop to consecrate you a bishop that you might be invested with the power of ordaining what ministers you pleased to officiate in your societies as clergymen? And did he not refuse to consecrate you, alleging this for his reason,—That according to the canon of the Greek Church more than one bishop must be present to assist at the consecration of a new one?"

Immediately an intimate friend of Wesley's

and one of his preachers, Thomas Olivers, replied to the Letter of Toplady's in which he (Olivers) said that Wesley authorized him to give the most positive and unqualified denial to the insinuation that he had asked Erasmus to ordain him a bishop.

These are the facts in the case. Notice:

1. Toplady does not say that Erasmus ordained Wesley, but only that he asked him, and he says this in the way of a question or insinuation.

2. Wesley gives a categorical denial to the insinuation that he asked Erasmus to ordain him. Would Erasmus ordain him without being asked, or force ordination upon him?

3. Even Toplady acknowledges that Wesley was not ordained by Erasmus.

4. Wesley was already convinced that there were only two orders in the ancient church—presbyters and deacons—and he believed himself a scriptural bishop. Would he be likely to seek a third order from Erasmus?

5. On the ground that he was a scriptural bishop he subsequently ordained presbyters for Scotland, America, and England. He never alleges any ordination by Erasmus for those ordinations, but only the providential exigencies

of the work and his providential place as the head of the movement and the fact that he is a *scriptural* bishop (presbyter).

6. Those ordinations were a bitter pill to his brother Charles and to his other Episcopal friends. But to allay their anxieties he never refers them to any ordination to the Episcopate by a Greek bishop. To overcome their difficulties an ounce of Erasmus would have been worth a pound of Scripture and Providence.

7. There is not a scintilla of contemporary evidence that Erasmus ordained Wesley.

8. All the probabilities in the case, Wesley's character, position, etc., look the other way. Wesley's attitude toward his own mission as the providential leader in an evangelistic movement, his conviction that God had raised him up for that and endowed him with all faculties for carrying it forward, make it improbable that he would have sought ordination to the Episcopate from a Greek bishop. He always claimed that he was as really a bishop as any bishop in England. He never ordained unless it was necessary, but when it was he did not hesitate to do it. For those reasons we may dismiss the story of Wesley's ordination by Erasmus as a myth.

Dr. Phœbus claims that after 1763 Wesley assumed a more autocratic style in governing the societies, gathered the reins more in his own hands, and did other things which are explained by a possible ordination to the episcopate. But all these things are explained by the development of the work. Besides, it is unlikely that a Greek bishop would ordain to the episcopate a man in the service or under the wing of the Church of England. The comity of the so-called Catholic Churches would forbid. It is also a canon of the Greek Church that three bishops must ordain to episcopate, and it is not likely that Erasmus would disregard such a canon. The Greek Church is strict in its adherence to rules of this kind.

Dr. Phœbus publishes a letter by an Episcopal clergyman, Samuel Peters, dated May 11, 1809, in which he (Peters) says he is convinced that Wesley was ordained by Erasmus, and says also that Seabury, Episcopal bishop-elect, applied to Wesley for ordination on the ground of such consecration by Erasmus. I have reason for believing the letter is either a forgery, or it is another illustration of Samuel Peters's vivid imagination, of which the first

was his book on the History of Connecticut, a book of exaggerations and lies.

As to the literature of this Greek bishop story Tyerman gives all the facts in his *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii, pp. 485–489. Dr. G. A. Phœbus has an article in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, January, 1878, pp. 88–111, and the editor has a note in the same number, pp. 195, 196, traversing the conclusion of Dr. Phœbus. Bishop R. J. Cooke (formerly professor of church history in Chattanooga University) has an excellent chapter on the same subject in his *Historic Episcopate*, pp. 139–155. That the High Churchman Seabury should apply to Wesley for ordination is almost as unthinkable as that he should apply to the Sultan. Even the rumor that he intended to apply to the Lutheran Church in Denmark in case he failed in England is rejected by his biographer, Dr. Beardsley (*Life and Correspondence of Samuel Seabury*, Boston, 1880, 3rd ed., 1882, p. 134), as without a particle of evidence in his letters and papers. In fact, Seabury says himself in August, 1785: "The plea of the Methodists is something like impudence. Mr. Wesley is only a Presbyter, and all his Ordinations Presbyterian, and in direct

opposition to the Church of England: And they can have no pretense for calling themselves Churchmen till they return to the unity of the Church, which they have unreasonably, unnecessarily, and wickedly broken, by their separation and schism" (Beardsley, p. 230).

APPENDIX II

Letter on the "Separation" of the Methodists from the Church of England

[A Columbia University student had made his Ph.D. thesis on "Separation of Methodists from the Established Church." This letter was written after reading his manuscript.]

. . . There was a sense in which Wesley's and the later doings were a kind of separation from the church, but the word "separation" brings up a false notion, namely, that Methodism was once united to the Church of England. How could it separate unless it was once a part of the church? Whereas it was never a part of that church. Here is the historical situation.

A couple of brothers, who happened to be Anglican ministers, went out to bring sinners to repentance. They succeeded. The converts they organized into societies to whom they occasionally gave the Supper in their own Methodist meetinghouses (itself an irregularity if not a violation of order). Lay preachers were sent out for the same evangelistic work. These were not allowed to

administer, and the people were urged to go to the churches to receive the Supper. Some of them did, some did not. Those who did not were not disciplined. (Wesley sometimes spoke of expelling those who did not go to parish churches, but do we ever read that he actually expelled them?) Sometimes the ministers welcomed the Methodists to communion, sometimes they repelled them. The Methodists were not enrolled as Anglican members except in the sense in which all English people who were baptized in infancy and confirmed were enrolled. The ministers, except those half dozen who were sympathetic to the movement, did not look upon the Methodists as belonging to them. The bishops in England took no notice of Methodism except to condemn it. An Irish bishop ordained a preacher or two, but that did not mean that he fathered Methodism or looked upon it as a part of his church. Wesley's words of exhortation to his followers to keep in with the church—though absolutely sincere—were words only, for all his decisive actions were against his words. (1) He licensed and sent out lay preachers to do a work entirely independent of the church, which was a wholesale violation of all church order and in itself a

separation from the church. (2) He and his preachers invaded every parish in England (speaking generally), which was also an outrage on the church, and besides a specific violation of his ordination vows. (3) He organized his followers into societies (really churches according to the New Testament), placed over them pastors and preachers, and all this new ecclesiastical life essentially went on without any more care for the Church of England than if that church were in the moon. If the Church of England had had any self-respect in the eighteenth century, she would have thrown Wesley out in quick meter. She cared for none of these things, and though her bishops denounced him and his movement they did not care enough for church order to discipline him, as the bishop of St. Alban's (Dr. Jacob) did the Rev. F. C. Fillingham, for joining in a non-Episcopal ordination in 1905. How could Methodists leave a church of which they were never an essential part, except that some of them went to the parish chapel to receive the Supper, just as a member of the Sons of Temperance or Good Templars might? Nor did the acts of the Conferences after Wesley's death change the matter. Unto this day it is and always has

been the custom of some Methodists in England to go to the parish church to worship and receive the sacrament, and that fact makes the Methodists no more a part of the Anglican body now than it did in Wesley's prime.

As to the Nonconformists, they were received into Methodism on the same basis as Anglicans, and they were expected to go to their own churches for worship and communion, and they did. Far from being a society of Anglicanism, Wesley boasted over and over again that his movement was for all, that no sectarian tests were made, that all were welcome to join on the same conditions. And they did all join on the same conditions. The reason the Nonconformist historians do not pay much attention to Methodists in the eighteenth century is not that Methodism was an Anglican movement, but because their own churches were recruited by confessions of faith, not by baptism and confirmation, and therefore the general run of sinners in England were Anglicans and not Dissenters. Comparatively few of the latter could in the nature of the case be converted by the Methodists, and the majority of those that were probably joined their own churches. Besides, the controversy on prelacy and the

persecution of Dissenters by Anglicans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had somewhat embittered the former, and therefore they would naturally ignore a movement led by a minister of the latter.

I must feel, therefore, that while individual Methodists did and do belong to the Church of England, it is unhistorical to use the word "separation" of a movement and of people in it who were never as such a part of that church, and calls up ideas which dislocate the actual relations, and puts the reader on a false scent.

APPENDIX III

THE REV. ARTHUR W. LITTLE ON COKE'S ORDINATION

On the morning of November 23, 1905, after chapel in Drew Theological Seminary, the lamented Professor Olin A. Curtis, by whose side I sat on the platform, handed me a clipping from the Chicago *Record-Herald*, November 14, 1905, which said:

Rev. Dr. Arthur W. Little, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Evanston, has written a little book on "The Times and the Teaching of John Wesley," in which he aims to show, not only that Wesley was a stanch churchman to the day of his death, but that Methodism is a spurious offshoot of the old Catholic and Apostolic Church. Methodists need not be utterly downcast, however, for Dr. Little assures them that "there is a light in the church's window and a loving welcome within." He writes from the "High-Church" viewpoint, and the pith of his book is found in the chapter in which he attacks the "so-called ordination" of Dr. Coke as the first Methodist bishop. This act of Wesley is designated as "the saddest, most inconsistent, most culpable, most fatal blunder of this zealous and godly man." In the author's opinion Dr. Coke was "an ambitious, vacillating priest, whose allegiance to the church sat lightly upon him,"

and who overpersuaded Wesley to perform "what appears to have been the sacrilege of a mock and schismatic ordination." He insists that Wesley never intended to make Coke a bishop, supporting this position with numerous quotations from Wesley's later utterances, which, he holds, have been misrepresented and suppressed.

I understand that Dr. Little has condensed the results of years of study into this small volume, and that he has drawn much of his material from the Wesleyana in the library of the Northwestern University. His literary style is cogent and forceful. Comment on his spirit and argument may safely be left to the Methodist brethren. (Published by the Young Churchman Company, Milwaukee, Wis.)

That is certainly interesting. It came to me that it was time for someone to make a careful, scientific, impartial study of Wesley's churchmanship, for only thus could his ordination of Coke be understood. No one in America has ever made that study. Various Protestant Episcopal and Methodist writers have assailed or defended Wesley for this or that, but no one has yet traced the evolution of Wesley's mind in the light of his history and the history of his movement in regard to the matter treated by the Evanston parson, whose life later came to a tragic end. In fact, our Protestant Episcopal brethren have carried on for many years an aggressive propaganda in books, pamphlets, and

tracts on Wesley as a Churchman for proselytes from Methodist churches. Wesley's ordination of Coke as superintendent came as the natural climax of a lifelong adjustment to historical necessities, and was the beginning of other ordinations; it can be understood, therefore, only in connection with the actual development.

The ordination of Coke (September 2, 1784) is so well known that I have not treated it in this book. But when the development I have just spoken of is understood, it will be seen that the Anglican judgment of that ordination as the "saddest, most inconsistent, most culpable, most fatal blunder of this zealous and godly man" is as absurd as it is false. From the High-Church standpoint the following were more "culpable and fatal blunders," because more fundamental, carrying the ordination "blunder" in their roots. (1) Wesley's determination to obey his bishops only just as far as he thought best. (2) His disregard of the whole prayer book, except to certain rubrics. (3) His determination to invade—if it came in his way—every parish in England with independent public worship over which bishops had no more control than they had over the canals in Mars; and this in spite of the pledge he had given in

his ordination to officiate in those parishes only where permitted by the bishop. Wesley defended his free-lance methods by the argument that as Fellow of a college he was not under any bishop. But this was only an excuse. Wesley resigned his fellowship in 1751, and it was evidently not intended that a Fellow was the only Anglican minister free from decent respect to authority. At least to a Catholic or High Churchman such an excuse would have been abhorrent. The real reason why Wesley went everywhere without regard to bishops was the same reason which explains and justifies all his departures, namely, *because he felt providentially called to a work of world-wide evangelization out of the ordinary channels, a work which would have been made abortive by respect to the rules of his church*. (4) His employment of lay preachers on a scale never before even dreamt of in the history of the church. Though in Catholic theory it is not a clerical function to address a congregation, and there was, therefore, nothing anti-ecclesiastical in this departure of Wesley's, looking deeper it was an insult to his church. For no layman can officiate thus without a special permit of the bishop, and permits are granted only rarely.

But here were scores of laymen let loose all over Great Britain and Ireland with formal authorization from Wesley, who in all respects except administering sacraments acted as clergymen, and who according to the New Testament conception of ordination were really ordained ministers. And yet Wesley's church had no jurisdiction over this host of half-ministers! How paltry the setting apart in Wesley's age of Coke to superintend the societies in America with Asbury in comparison with these four tremendous clefts in church order which "this zealous and godly man" had been making for nearly fifty years! O no! The "fatal blunder," the "most culpable" act of Wesley in his breaches of churchmanship, was not the ordination of Coke or of anyone else (and he ordained several), but was when, in those far distant years after 1738, he allowed that wind which bloweth where it listeth, and of which ye hear the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth—when he allowed the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow away his church loyalty. (5) For many years Charles Wesley had his own Methodist chapel in London, of which he was regular pastor, regular under himself and John, but not under a bishop,

to which he administered the Lord's Supper as often as he liked. He held his services in church hours and went along as though there were no Church of England which alone gave him clerical standing and sacramental rights! John also administered the Sacrament in the Methodist chapels in London and elsewhere. Ah, the ordination of Coke, the quiet act of a few minutes before three or four people in a private chamber in the early gray of that September day, was hardly to be mentioned before these lifelong dramatic defiances of church order before the eyes of all the world, of which it was the climax (or, shall we say, the anti-climax?). And yet Charles was scandalized when he heard of the Coke incident! Human nature is queer, is it not? For half a century he had been part and parcel of a mighty movement which was building up a rival ecclesiasticism—for that is what it really was—to his church, of which the world furnished and furnishes no equal! And now he feels the Coke matter as a bitter pill!

As to Coke being an "ambitious, vacillating priest, whose allegiance to the church sat lightly upon him," this little book is not about him. If the reader wants to know if

this judgment is just, let him read the Life of Coke by Drew (1818) and especially by Etheridge (1860), and he will find all the facts. Coke was ambitious, but in no selfish sense. He had regard to ecclesiastical honors, and made that famous proposition to Bishop White in 1791 to unite the Methodists more or less with the Protestant Episcopalians, which brought down upon him the rebuke of Asbury and the Conference of 1808, who made the little restless Doctor eat humble pie. But there was nothing dishonorable or disloyal in any sense or to any party in his proposition; and if there was indiscretion, Coke made the *amende honorable* in noble style. He was not vacillating in the sense intended, but kept up his work in connection with Wesley and the Conference with fidelity and consecration till the end. He did not leave his curacy for Wesley, but was thrown out of it on account of his piety and earnestness, and when he joined Wesley's movement he did so as still a Church of England man. In fact, from the Methodist point of view the trouble with Coke was his over-loyalty to his church. In 1799, in a letter to the bishop of London, he proposed ordination of the best Methodist preachers in Eng-

land by the bishops so that "every deviation from the Church of England might be done away."[1] We know from our sources that both Wesley and Coke wanted a closer approximation of the Church of England in the new adjustments he was sent over here to make in 1784, but they both reckoned "without their host"—the iron will of Asbury, who completely mastered the little envoy, probably destroyed the "sketch" that Wesley sent over, and arranged matters through the socalled Christmas Conference as to him seemed best for the work.

Nor is it true that Coke "overpersuaded Wesley to perform" the ordination of 1784. All the important steps in Wesley's movements which were departures from his church were adopted reluctantly but deliberately, and when once adopted were never recalled nor apologized for, but were taken as providential arrangements as with a kind of divine finality. This is true of even the only serious blunder he ever made (outside of the appalling misstep of his sudden marriage), the huge mistake of the arbitrarily selected Legal Hundred. Was Mephistopheles at his elbow then? He had been repeatedly asked to provide in some way for

[1] See this correspondence in Etheridge, Chap. xx.

the American societies, and had been revolving the matter. He finally thought out a plan and mentioned it to the one chiefly involved, Coke, between whom and Wesley there were always cordial relations. Coke apparently told the history to his friend and later biographer, the metaphysician shoemaker Samuel Drew, one of the many minds whom the movement stirred, who tells the story as follows:

In February, 1784, Wesley called Coke into his study in City Road, London, and spoke to him in substance as follows: As the Revolution in America had separated the colonies from the mother country forever and the Episcopal establishment was utterly abolished, the societies had been represented to him as in a most deplorable condition; that an appeal had been made through Mr. Asbury, in which he requested him to provide some mode of church government suited to their exigencies; and that having long and seriously revolved the subject in his thoughts he had intended to adopt the plan which he was now about to unfold; that as he had invariably endeavored in every step he had taken to keep as closely to the Bible as possible, so in the present decision he hoped he was not to deviate from it; that in keeping his eye upon the primitive churches in the ages of unadulterated Christianity he had much admired the mode of ordaining bishops which the church of Alexandria had practiced (to preserve its purity that church would never suffer the interference of a foreign bishop in any of their ordinations; but the presbyters on the death of a bishop

exercised the right of ordaining another from their own body; and this practice continued among them for two hundred years, till the days of Dionysius); and finally, that being himself a presbyter, he wished Dr. Coke to accept ordination at his hands, and to proceed in that character to the continent of America to superintend the societies in the United States.[2]

There is an oft-repeated Anglican legend that Coke was behind the 1784 ordinations. This is false, but like many legends there is a grain of truth in it, and that truth is this: Coke did not accede at first to Wesley's proposition. He asked for time to study the subject as to whether presbyters could advance one to a higher office of superintendent. He looked up the matter in Scripture and the Fathers, and after two months wrote to Wesley that he could concur. The next step was Wesley's laying the American matter before the Annual Conference in Leeds, July, 1784, and receiving concurrence, which, of course, was merely general, as legally Wesley was the Conference. Nor do we know what Wesley laid before the brethren, as the Minutes mention nothing of this, and it was probably only some indefinite

[2] Drew, *Life Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D.* N. Y. ed. 1818, pp. 63, 64.

scheme of giving them the sacraments. Here Coke steps in and becomes a decisive factor in the *form the scheme took.* Coke was afraid of not being received by Asbury, and was therefore anxious for all the influence he could get from Wesley. So in the interval between the Conference and the ordination he wrote a strong letter to Wesley, urging that his (Coke's) power of ordaining the preachers in America should be received from Wesley himself through the imposition of hands, by "an authority formally received from you," that he lay hands on Whatcoat and Vasey so that Coke may have two presbyters in America to assist him to ordain, that, according to Fletcher's advice, Wesley give us letters testimonial of the different offices with which you have invested us, and if the thing becomes known you must acknowledge that I acted under your direction.[3] It would appear from this letter that Wesley had intended to set apart Coke or have him set apart to the office of oversight or superintendency in America for the purpose of supplying the sacraments, but not by formal

[3] See this letter in Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism,* London, 1857, i, 541–543, and in Etheridge, *Life of Coke,* Chap. iv.

ordination in the laying on of hands followed by formal authorization, and that this part of his program (with the laying on of hands on Whatcoat and Vasey to make them elders) was suggested by Coke. This explains also the remark of Wesley's friend, Alexander Knox, that Coke told him that "Dr. Coke urged Mr. Wesley to this procedure."[4] Nor is the excuse alleged for Wesley by some Anglicans that he was now in his dotage and so allowed himself to be led any truer than the charge just considered. On the contrary, Wesley was as bright in mind and apparently almost as strong in body as when he began his movement forty-six years before.[5]

The ordination of Coke is called a "mock" one, but the same objector calls the ordainer a "zealous and godly man." Both cannot be true. If Wesley was a godly man, then he was a reverential man. In fact, reverence for sacred rites, for order and propriety, for God and everything pertaining to God, was in-

[4] Knox, *Remarks on the Life and Character of John Wesley*, appended to Southey, *Life of Wesley and Rise and Progress of Methodism*, ed. by C. C. Southey, 2d American ed. by Curry, 1847 ('55), ii, 359.

[5] See the remarkable letter to Barry written as late as February, 1785, quoted by Etheridge, in appendix, note IX.

grained in the very texture of his soul. Wesley set apart Coke in all seriousness to meet an emergency in the progress of the Kingdom, and he had for it historical and religious reasons well worked out. (1) On the ground of the study of the New Testament and early church history he came to believe that presbyters and bishops were the same order, though they might be different in office. That meant that essentially he was a bishop. In case of providential urgency, therefore, he might be compelled to use his right of ordinations. (2) He believed that for a century and more the presbyters in Alexandria consecrated their bishop, and that the bishop so constituted was received as perfectly valid throughout Christendom. (3) He believed that he himself was an extraordinary messenger sent by God—not miraculously or by prophetic call in the biblical sense—in the ways of providence to do the work that he was doing for the world, and as such it was his duty to carry on and consolidate the work. Answer as you will the question of the expediency or right of Wesley to act as he did in 1784, there is absolutely no doubt that he was certain that every important step in his movement—and especially this one

—was dictated, not only by providential leading, but by large and sound reasons.

The ordination is called "schismatic." That is the pathos in the Wesley situation: almost superstitiously loyal to the Church of England, compelling his people to meet in unearthly hours so as not to take them away from the regular services of the church, urging them to attend faithfully those services and threatening them if they did not, etc., he was yet in all larger and permanent ways unconsciously setting at naught all his loyalties and building up an aggressive and closely-knit rival ecclesiasticism, and persisting in this event when his attention was called to it by his friends in the Establishment. And so here this pathetic irony still clung to Wesley: the Church of England in America dissolved so far as effective organization was concerned, no bishop there to ordain, the bishops in England refusing to ordain for Wesley, his converts in America clamoring for the sacraments, good order requiring that they should receive them from ordained men, impossible to receive them from Anglicans for various reasons—among others that over vast tracts there were none; and now he meets this dire necessity in harmony

with the evolution of his whole work and of his whole career by himself—according to ancient Alexandrian precedents whose validity was undoubted—setting apart with canonical assistance of two presbyters a superintendent to set apart others in America for sacramental service for his people, so that they may, as he says himself, "still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England," and yet really and unintentionally by that very act forming a new church with no more relation henceforth to the Church of England than with the Buddhist Church of Ceylon! Schismatic? Yes, in the sense that Wesley as an Anglican elder had no right to ordain to the office of overseer (= bishop), though for nearly half a century he had been doing hundreds of things equally irregular; no, in the sense that Wesley believed that only by this step could a greater irregularity or evil, or whatever it might be called, be averted, namely, the total loss of the American Methodists to the Church of England.

"He insists that Wesley never intended to make Coke a bishop, supporting this position with" quotations from Wesley. That is easy. Everybody knows Wesley's cutting letter to

Asbury rebuking him for taking the title of bishop. But Wesley was here as inconsistent as the Anglican exploiters of his churchmanship. For if Wesley did not intend to make Coke a bishop (he was already a presbyter) he did not transgress any rules of his church. Why then damn him? But the only order left was that of overseer, or bishop, and that was the order necessary to do the work that Wesley wanted done in America, namely, ordain Asbury as deacon, elder, and bishop, so that he could ordain others, and thus the sacraments could be regularly administered. For this reason Wesley ordained ("set apart," but in his short-hand Diary he says "ordained") Coke as superintendent or bishop. The reason he did not use the usual ecclesiastical words "bishop" and "ordained" was that he did not wish to unnecessarily provoke—if I might so say—his church to jealousy and bring the hornets around his head. Besides, his ecclesiastical reverence forbade him to drag the old words out of their old associations. But that it was a real ordination and a real bishop the bitter expostulations of his brother Charles and other Anglican friends prove all too well.

As to the literature of the topics discussed

in this book, I have preferred to work up the matter from Wesley's own writings, without much regard—except to the great *Life* by Tyerman—to other books. On Wesley as a Sociologist I am a pioneer, though a somewhat similar line is followed by Daniel D. Thompson (*Wesley as a Social Reformer*, Cincinnati, 1898), who made his *Northwestern Christian Advocate* such a powerful force for social betterment in those too brief years (1901-8) before his untimely and sudden taking off. I have written the study entirely independently of his book, though I refer to it once. This paper was printed in the *London Quarterly Review*, April, 1908, and was immediately issued as a separate publication by the Wesleyan Methodist Publishing House, London. I have to thank the kindness of the Book Steward of that Office or House, the Rev. J. Alfred Sharp, for permission to use it here. It has been enlarged. I know of no monograph on Wesley's theology. The Germans on Luther far out-do us on Wesley. The three best books on the ecclesiastical significance of Wesley are, on the one hand, Hockin, *John Wesley and Modern Methodism*, 4th ed., 1887; Urlin, *The Churchman's Life of Wesley*, new ed., rev., 1886, and on the

other, Rigg, *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*, 1878, 2d ed., rev., 1886. Here again I desired to make a fresh study, and have had regard mainly to the sources.

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